THE IMPACT OF AGE OF ENTRY TO SCHOOL ON BOYS' READING ATTITUDES AND SKILLS DURING KEY STAGE ONE

Judy Lever-Chain

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University of London

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ABSTRACT

British children enter school earlier than their European counterparts. According to statutory guidelines they must commence school in the term following their fifth birthday. In reality Local Education Authority policy has fostered a trend towards earlier admission, with most children in school at four or four and a half. Research suggests that this disadvantages boys who may be unready for formal literacy instruction and in particular summer-born boys, the youngest cohort in the year group. This longitudinal study explores the effect of age of entry to school on boys' reading development, focussing on attitudes as well as achievement. Adopting both quantitative and qualitative methodologies the study examined this development within a sample of 60, summer-born boys as they moved through Key Stage One. The boys were drawn randomly from 18 schools within six Local Education Authorities operating different admissions policies. Comparisons were drawn between 31 boys with part-time Nursery education before Year One, and 29 with full-time Reception class experience. Collection of data commenced in 1998, so that the National Literacy Strategy governed the sample's school literacy experiences in Years One and Two. Data was collected from the boys and their parents on three occasions: before entry to Year One, at the end of Year One and the end of Year Two. The study illustrates the impact of commencing school on boys' reading attitudes both directly and through the triadic relationship established between school, parents and children. It traces the development of boys' reading attitudes over time as the sample's experiences became more uniform and analyses the long-term impact of early entry into school. Contrary to parental belief as examined through parental interview and questionnaires, boys who commenced school earlier were not advantaged in terms of reading achievement. The data suggest that an early start to school was accompanied by heightened adult expectations (both parents' and teachers'), of which the boys became keenly aware. This affected the boys' attitudes toward reading and their reading routines, often acting detrimentally on their reading development. The study examines the implications of these findings for school admission policies.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1. Age of entry to school: policy and trends

British children commence school earlier than any of their European counterparts. The statutory age of starting school, set at the term after children have reached their fifth birthday, compares with ages six or even seven in most of the rest of Europe. In practice the majority of children are entering school well before their fifth birthday as a result of a trend in LEA admission policies towards the admission of children to full-time school from the age of four (Daniels et al., 1995). Much debate has been engendered by this issue and has entered the public domain via the media. A Channel 4 Dispatches programme, The Early Years, broadcast in January 1998 and a Panorama documentary, in October 1998, both addressed the question of when children should start school. The pages of the Times Educational Supplement frequently offer a platform for the most emotive aspects of this particular debate. On October 17th 1998 a headline read "The jury is still out on early years" while by the following month, November 6th we read "Formality damages under-fives". More recently, the Politeia report, advising government against the premature placement of children in school was given national press coverage: "Children 'being' harmed by early schooling" (Owen, 2002).

Whether conducted by teachers, parents or those involved in educational research, the debate hinges on the form of educational provision most suited to children between the ages of four and six. This debate will be explored in some detail in the pages of the literature review, which follows. It sets the context for the present project which harnesses issues about age of entry to literacy outcomes, high-profile concerns in a period dominated by the impact of the National Literacy Strategy (NLS) and its literacy hour, the introduction of base-line assessment and the promotion of The National Year of Reading in 1999.

1.2. Educational provision for the under-fives

Educational provision for the under-fives varies widely offering a range of services which differ markedly in quality and quantity. Unlike many European countries there is no single national system, which imposes some degree of uniformity on early years educational experiences.

In 1996 the government's publication of Desirable Outcomes (S.C.A.A., 1996) was an attempt to create a degree of cohesion by defining the necessary criteria which might apply to all provision of education/care of the under-fives. The Foundation Stage, reflecting these Desirable Outcomes, was introduced in September 2000 (Q.C.A., 2000). This has gone some way to acknowledging the unique needs of the pre-school child but has not resolved the tensions and dilemmas of when and how the transition to Key Stage One takes place.

At the time when this study began, one of the most pronounced differences in terms of the education of four year-olds, lay between those LEAs who operated a Reception class system for children prior to the statutory age of admission at five, and those who offered part-time nursery education. In a growing number of LEAs children are entering a relatively formal school setting, full-time, just after their fourth birthday. In these authorities, the youngest cohort of children, those born in the summer months, can experience up to a whole extra year of school education as compared to summer-born children in LEAs who only admit children on or after the statutory age of admission. In the latter case children with birthdays between May and August are likely to by-pass the Reception class altogether and enter Year One straight from Nursery.

The differences have informed the design of the present study, which compares a group of summer-born boys in each setting. The focus on summer-born boys was developed on the basis that any effect of age of entry to school is likely to be most pronounced in the youngest cohort. Indeed a considerable amount of research has

already been conducted in this area and will be presented subsequently. The literature review presents evidence in support of season of birth effects and explores their implications in the context of the debate about age of entry to school.

1.3. Gender differences in reading achievement and attitude toward reading

The present study focuses exclusively on boys, a response to the mounting body of evidence, which suggests that boys lag behind girls in terms of academic performance and are also less well-motivated. The focus on boys developed from prominent trends in research which are cited in the literature review. In terms of this study it was felt that the investigation of early attitudes toward reading among boys might reflect some interesting trends and help to shed light on later performance in school.

Sampling criteria also affected the choice of a single sex sample. In view of the small scale of the study it was preferable to maintain the maximum possible homogeneity within the sample.

1.4. Reading development in the home context

The beginning of school is accompanied in most cases by radical changes in the classroom experiences of children. The transition from Nursery to Reception or Year One means, in most cases, a change from very part-time pre-school education, in a child-centred environment, to a full day within a highly structured organisation. In school, attainment targets in literacy are clearly spelled out and become the focus of much of the day's activities, recently intensified by the literacy hour. For some, entry into this more formal environment has occurred well before the statutory age of entry to school, while for others, not until a whole year later. The effects of these different classroom settings, however, are not viewed solely in relation to the direct impact they may have on the child. The study also investigates how parents' expectations and attitudes toward their children's literacy may change with the onset of formal school and how this in turn might influence the way children's attitudes toward reading are

encouraged to develop. The literature review presents research evidence that describes the very varied ways in which the home context impacts upon children's literacy development.

1.5. A rationale for the study of attitude toward reading

This study investigates how the introduction of compulsory education affects the development of children's reading during Key Stage One and whether the age of commencement of compulsory schooling has a bearing on this development. The slant adopted in this research moves away from the traditional and more restricted focus on literacy achievement as manifest in the SATs or traditional reading tests and suggests the need for a broader range of literacy outcome measures with a far greater emphasis on attitudinal dimensions of reading. This is not just a response to the acknowledged limitations of many reading tests and recent doubts about their reliability, as reflected in the on-going debate about the validity of SATs results. It reflects a broader definition of the term literacy than that implied by reading tests scores alone. These expanded boundaries of definition are set in a well-established arena of debate surrounding the issue.

The original incentive for this research into the attitudinal dimensions of reading was derived from the accumulation of anecdotal evidence in the field, through many years of practical work in teaching young children to read. Working within a formal Reception class setting it seemed that many children were becoming resistant to the idea of reading at the very early stages, while struggling with the acquisition of technical reading skills. The ability to decode text seemed to dominate parents' and children's views about reading.

The theoretical rationale for the study of reading attitude is rooted in a framework which incorporates a particular conception of literacy and a model of reading acquisition in which attitude features prominently. It is also based on evidence of the association between attitude and achievement. The literature review explores these concepts and provides the theoretical background for the design of the main study. It

presents the changing understanding of the attitude construct and the development of the methodology for its measurement.

The literature review revealed a paucity of instruments for the measurement of young children's attitude toward reading. This led to the pilot study that developed a new instrument later employed in the main study.

1.6. Research questions

Against the background of continuing debate about admission policies and widespread acknowledgement of the significant role attitude plays in the reading process, the present research is addressed to these questions:

- What types of attitudes toward reading do boys develop between the ages of five and seven?
- Does attitude toward reading at the age of five have any predictive value for attitude toward reading at the age of seven?
- Is there a systematic difference in reading attitudes between boys who begin school at different ages?
- Do boys who begin school prior to the compulsory age achieve a higher standard of reading than those who begin school according to statutory requirement?
- How are the demands of compulsory schooling reflected in parental attitudes toward and expectations of their boys' reading development?
- What implications do the findings have for government policies on compulsory age of admission to school?

CHAPTER 2

AGE OF ENTRY TO SCHOOL: THE EARLY YEARS DEBATE

2.1. Introduction

A growing awareness of the long-term implications of early years education has recently drawn much public interest to the debate about age of starting school. In October 1998, a BBC documentary Panorama programme disseminated the findings of American research which suggested that the type of experiences met in pre-school are associated with various measures of social functioning in adulthood. Predominantly, and particularly in Great Britain, the debate has focused on school-related outcome measures, often in terms of literacy.

This section explores present trends in policy regarding age of entry to school in Great Britain and discusses the quality of education provided by early years settings. It analyses both British and international evidence addressing the question of whether an early start to school makes a positive or negative contribution to children's literacy development.

2.2. Trends in age of entry

Research in this area has been pursued both in a comparative European context and within Britain. This review describes the status quo in Great Britain, before exploring the implications of age of entry to school as suggested by both these research contexts.

As mentioned earlier, Britain has one of the lowest statutory ages for school admission in Europe, a trend so far fostered by government policy. In 1995, 94% of LEAs operating a single admission policy allowed entry to school prior to statutory

requirement (Daniels et al., 1995 p.241). This research showed a trend towards earlier admission in cases of LEAs that had changed policy admission in the last five years.

The government slogan of free Nursery education for all has been realised in a dramatic increase in the number of children being placed in Reception classes. Instead of receiving Nursery education these children are in fact commencing school aged four. A recent government estimate suggests that the number of four year-olds in Reception classes has risen from 56% to 59% in the last four years (Ward, 2002).

2.3. Early versus late entry to school: pedagogy or expediency

The age of five was first set as the statutory age of admission to school in the 1870 Education Act, even then not without controversy. The primary arguments for starting at this young age stemmed from real concerns regarding the welfare of children who might have been subject to either exploitation in the home or poor conditions on the street. The practice was condemned by the Board of Education Inspectors in 1905: "There has been a careful examination of some thousands of children.... it will be seen that there is almost complete unanimity that the children between the ages of three and five get practically no intellectual advantage from school instruction" (Board of Education, 1905).

Nowadays, the arguments tend more towards expediency than pedagogy. In 1989 Woodhead wrote: "The precise educational rationale for the school environment being offered to four year-old children has been given inadequate attention, or overlooked altogether" (Woodhead, 1989 p.19). Brown and Cleave suggested that: "....changes in age of admission were often a matter of political expediency rather than educational priority" (Browne & Cleave, 1994 p.66). This view was echoed by Sharp who claimed: "Certainly, there would appear to be no compelling educational rationale for a statutory age of five or for the practice of admitting four-year-olds to school" (Sharp, 1998 p.6). The trend towards the introduction of formal education at an increasingly young age has been paralleled in America where according to Elkind:

"... educational practice is determined by economic, political and social considerations much more than it is by what we know about what constitutes good pedagogy for children" (Elkind, 1986 p.632). Elkind's article was a vehement response to a movement he viewed as potentially very damaging. Many of its features were the same as those under discussion in England; the lengthening of days for kindergarten programs, the growing pressure in many states to begin school at the age of four and the publication of books encouraging parents to teach their babies and toddlers to read.

A shortage of funding for early education has promoted the trend for earlier admission. An ever increasing proportion of four year-olds are admitted into Reception classes which, requiring a less generous adult-pupil ratio, are far cheaper to run than purpose built day nurseries (Audit Commission, 1995 p.28). A scathing attack on the government for colluding with the lowering of the school starting age, "in order to expand 'nursery' education on the cheap" was delivered by Anning: " In effect, the school starting age in England and Wales, already at aged five the lowest in Europe, has been lowered by serendipity to the age of four" (Anning, 1998 p.306).

A number of factors lend credence to those who share these views and see the trend as one driven by expediency. Falling rolls in primary schools from the mid-seventies, led to the creation of greater space and more resources within the school environment. Changes in employment patterns have resulted in a growing demand for child care in the pre-school years. The number of families where both, or in many cases, the only parent, are employed outside the home has increased. Meanwhile, mounting pressure from the government on single mothers to seek such work is likely to make the need for pre-school child care even more pressing. In some areas, the trend has been propelled by parents who have exerted pressure on the LEA to adopt a policy for earlier admission to school. According to Sharp, this was due partly to the lack of adequate facilities for full-time child care, but many also consider these extra terms at school to be advantageous in terms of: "an early introduction to the basic skills of reading and writing" (NFER/SCDC, 1987 p.8). British parents were found to be far more concerned with 'academic' development in the pre-school years than their

European counterparts (David, 1992). The study, which compared the major concerns of parents in Britain and Belgium, concluded that: "Parents in my study have, I believe, been bamboozled by the tabloid, Conservative press and by the pressure relative to the National Curriculum, into believing that children need to learn to read very young" (David, 1992 p.8-9).

At government level, pedagogical arguments have rationalised the trend. Anning argued that the drive for raising standards in school led to the rationale that: "the sooner children are inducted into the system the better" (Anning, 1998 p.301). "The priority for politicians and policy makers has been to prepare young children for 'proper' school as quickly as possible" (Anning, 1998 p.301). Anning pointed to research which suggested that this is more a political than a parental priority. Parents claim to value "ethos and atmosphere in a school" more than academic results, although these too influence choice.

Against scant evidence of either the "appropriateness" or "effectiveness" (Anning, 1998) of academic preparation in a pre-school setting, governmental bodies have moved inexorably towards the blurring of distinctions between school and pre-school. The move has challenged those who view the early years as a distinct and unique phase in the educational system. In America Elkind saw this as part of an entirely new concept of the young child, a notion termed "the competent child". It was a concept fostered more by social and political forces than by any new findings relating to the learning modes of young children. Elkind quoted Jerome Bruner's "totally unsubstantiated claim" that "you can teach any child any subject matter at any age in an intellectually honest way" (Elkind, 1986 p.633), as typical of the mistaken arguments driving this educational trend. Nevertheless such arguments dominated the early education scene in America leading to very similar developments to those witnessed in Great Britain during the same period. "All across the country, educational programs devised for school-age children are being applied to the education of young children, as well" (Elkind, 1986 p.632).

The introduction of the National Literacy Strategy and the literacy hour into Reception classes has further undermined the teachers' opportunities of providing a developmentally appropriate curriculum for four year-olds. By imposing a uniform model for the teaching of literacy for children between the ages of four and eleven, young children have been denied access to the diversity of routes to literacy. This model "militates against the teacher being able to use her professional judgement to adapt and develop the curriculum in a way that is appropriate to her class" (Fisher, 2000). The emotional repercussions of the literacy hour have also caused concern. Following a piece of qualitative action research with Year One children, the class teacher observed the immense importance attached by children to the feelings associated with learning: "Given these commentaries and perceptions, the question arises whether enough consideration is given to the emotional dimension of learning" (Hanke, 2000 p.297).

The formality of the early years is once again being challenged by practitioners. Evidence submitted to the House of Commons Education Sub-committee suggested that: "Many professionals expressed concern that overly formal instruction in the Reception class would impede the learning of young children, especially boys" (Education and Employment Committee, 2000 p.15).

The quality of pre-school provision lies at the heart of this debate which has been fuelled by research on the long-term outcomes of different types of pre-school provision as well as evaluations of the status quo. Evidence drawn from both these sources illustrates the diversity of views surrounding the definition of "quality" in early years provision, its impact on children's later development and its intrinsic tie to when and how children commence formal school.

2.4. Long-term effects of early provision

"When pre-school education is of high quality it leads to lasting enhancement of educational performance and later employment". This assertion was based on

evidence drawn from an analysis of diverse projects both in Europe and America (Sylva & Wiltshire, 1993). Foremost amongst this evidence are the findings of the widely quoted High/Scope project (Schweinhart et al., 1998). Although the sample consisted primarily of children from disadvantaged backgrounds and therefore was not representative of the population as a whole, the data has broad implications for the quality of educational provision offered in the early years.

In this project the children were randomly assigned to three different types of pre-school programme:

i High/Scope, where children were encouraged to follow a set pattern of 'plan, do review'
ii Direct Instruction, where children were teacher-led and the programme had an academic bias
iii Nursery School, where teacher worked with themes and children had freedom in their choice of activity

At age 27 there were significant differences between the groups in terms of various social measures, (employment, arrests, family structures) with most problems occurring in the 'Direct Instruction' group. The authors concluded that emphasis on social rather than academic skills in the early years and a child-centred approach to learning have a very strong impact in later life.

A smaller scale study conducted by Jowett and Sylva (Jowett & Sylva, 1986) also stressed the importance of quality provision for pre-school children. Two matched groups of children, with a total sample size of 90, who had attended different kinds of pre-school, were compared in the Reception class. The groups had experienced either a poorly resourced play group or a local authority nursery. All children were in a working class area so the sample was biased towards those from disadvantaged backgrounds. In reception those who had attended the nursery tended to engage in play of higher cognitive challenge and showed more persistence in the face of challenge.

The current EPPE project (Sylva, 2000) has also yielded some early data upholding the positive impact of certain types of pre-school education. This is a five year

longitudinal study, begun in 1997, which is investigating the effect of pre-school on children's cognitive development and social-behavioural outcomes at entry to school and two years later at the end of Key Stage One. The sample involves 2800 children from 141 pre-school centres. "The preliminary results support the view that pre-school education, while by no means eliminating the powerful impact of inequalities, can play some role in helping to reduce their impact" (Sylva, 2000 p.8). Certain types of pre-school contributed more positively than others to progress in literacy, language, early number concepts and non-verbal skills. Case studies on the centres with the most positive influence on these measures are being conducted at present.

2.5. Adjustment to school

Alongside the long-term implications of pre-school educational provision, quality is a crucial factor in securing a smooth transition from home to pre-school and school. The importance of a satisfactory adjustment to school can be demonstrated in terms of both academic and attitudinal outcomes. Inappropriate provision may lead to poor adjustment to school, which in turn is detrimental to outcomes in terms of academic achievement.

Hughes and his colleagues (Hughes, 1979) carried out a study to ascertain the nature and extent of difficulties encountered by children when they entered school. The most common problems cited by teachers were 'concentration' and 'restlessness'. An inappropriate classroom environment and accompanying expectations might help to explain why "restlessness" was judged by teachers to be the single most common classroom problem at five years" (Hughes, 1979 p.194). The statistics give cause for concern: 13% were encountering difficulty in coping with school, while 25% had difficulty with language, persistence with activities and fine motor-control.

Riley's study highlighted the relationship between adjustment to school and success in reading. The children who did not adjust to school positively after half a term, "were four times less likely to be reading by the end of the year regardless of their skills on entry" (Riley, 1996 p.30). This study did not find an association between

school entry age and how the child settled into school. "Other factors proved to be more influential than age" (Riley, 1996 p.33). Against the background of a significant literature relating to the problems of four-year-olds in school this finding was surprising. However, it does focus attention on the issue raised in so many of the studies that have been cited, namely the quality of educational provision for four-year-olds.

2.6. The quality of educational provision for the under-fives

Although 'quality' continues to elude precise definition, a number of reports produced since the late 1980's reflect some consensus on the characteristics which determine high quality in the education of children prior to statutory schooling. Ball defined 'quality' by these criteria: early learning curriculum, training of staff, staff/children ratios, buildings and equipment and the involvement/partnership of parents (Ball, 1994).

The complexities of defining quality were explored in a paper by Siraj-Blatchford and Wong (Siraj-Blatchford, 1999). Two approaches to defining quality were proposed. One was based on objective criteria similar to those outlined by Ball. The paper lists research projects that have adopted such criteria to show improvement in measurable outcomes (Siraj-Blatchford, 1999 p.12). The other, a "relativist approach" urges more awareness of context, allowing the different perspectives of those affected to influence the definition of quality. This approach takes into account international differences, allowing for a range of cultural contexts. A helpful harmonisation of these two approaches was suggested by allowing objective criteria to govern the pedagogy and to retain subjectivity "in terms of curriculum goals and content".

The quality of educational provision for the under-fives is now monitored by Ofsted against the criteria of the Foundation Stage (Q.C.A., 2000). This document was developed from the learning goals set out in the Desirable Outcomes (S.C.A.A.,

1996). These outcomes were divided into six areas of learning set out some years earlier in the Rumbold Report (Department of Education and Science, 1990) but not adopted in their entirety. These are made up of: Personal and Social Development; Language and Literacy; Mathematics; Knowledge and Understanding of the World; Physical Development and Creative Development. Supposedly, these areas of learning do not constitute a curriculum. However, as pointed out in 'An Introduction to Curriculum for 3-5 Year-Olds': "The Desirable Outcomes, then, echo the subjects of the National Curriculum and the requirements of the curriculum at Key Stage One and the document is clearly set within an educational context" (Moriarty & Siraj-Blatchford, 1998 p.5). These Desirable Outcomes, more recently referred to as 'early learning goals', "provide the basis for planning throughout the Foundation Stage", a new stage in education, introduced in September 2000, for children aged three to the end of Reception class (Q.C.A., 2000). Although the Desirable Outcomes are open enough to be subject to very different interpretation and implementation, there is a clear and explicit academic emphasis: "The definition was couched in terms of a 'high status' framework of preparation for academic achievements. Its focus was on the mind" (Anning & Edwards, 1999 p.80). The Foundation Stage prepares the children for learning in Key Stage One and is consistent with the National Curriculum" (Q.C.A., 2000).

Nurseries seem not to be immune from the educational tide. Under pressure from government guidelines, parents and teachers are moving towards promoting the ever-earlier acquisition of literacy skills. A recently published study gave some evidence of the negative effects of so-called 'Desirable Learning Outcomes' (Browne, 1998). This study grew from concern about a trend, which has put increasing emphasis on cognitive development particularly in the areas of language and literacy. "This may be because the Desirable Learning Outcomes for literacy have been crudely interpreted to mean that four year-olds should be able to recognise all the letters of the alphabet, know their phonic sounds and have acquired a sight vocabulary of key words" (Browne, 1998 p.10). In setting the context for her research Browne posed this key question: are the practices which have and are being increasingly adopted in the education of four year-olds likely to "encourage motivation and positive attitudes as

well as to develop reading skills?" (Browne, 1998 p.10). The study was based on visits to 13 pre-school settings which included LEA Nursery classes, private nurseries, day care centres and playgroups. Data about the "approach to reading" was collected through observations of the settings and discussions with a range of adults working in these settings. Practices within these settings were categorised as either appropriate or inappropriate defined by a list of criteria drawn from an extensive literature cited by Browne. These practices have been reproduced in table 2.1.

Appropriate practices	**Inappropriate practices**
Purposeful and relevant learning activities	Abstract materials
Real understanding of new concepts	Rote learning, isolated skill development
Active exploration	Teacher directed
Experimentation	Right answers, drill and skill
Develop motivation and interest	Extrinsic rewards
Develop confidence	Learning is hard, getting things wrong
Encourage long term positive dispositions	Learning is a chore and its purpose is unclear

Table 2.1 Descriptions of early years practices as defined by Browne (Browne, 1998)

Five of the thirteen settings had adopted a formal literacy curriculum using reading schemes and phonic programmes with accompanying work sheets. In these settings these components had displaced and marginalised a broad range of developmentally more appropriate reading practices. Story times, book corners, writing areas and undirected literacy activities were all viewed as less important: "They were seen as part of the general nursery provision rather than crucial introductions to literacy for young children" (Browne, 1998 p.12). Browne suggested that the decision to adopt these more formal practices was taken "in response to the staff's interpretation of the Desirable Outcomes for Children's Learning (S.C.A.A., 1996)" (Browne, 1998 p.12).

The EPPE (Sylva, 2000) project was also influenced by the Desirable Learning Outcomes in assessing the quality of pre-school provision. The observational Early Childhood Environmental Rating Scale {ECERS-R (revised)} was revised for use in the EPPE project so as to reflect the "presence of the pre-school curriculum and pedagogy related to the Desirable Learning Outcomes" (ibid. p.9). It was later extended to assess the more educational elements of pre-school provision. ECERS-E (extended) included four additional sub-scales: 'language', 'mathematics', 'science' and 'environment and diversity'.

David expressed deep misgivings about the appropriateness of these learning goals, comparing the model unfavourably with early childhood philosophies adopted in Wales and Italy (Emilia-Romagna). "It would seem that being under five in England is to be less joyful, less celebrated, less imaginative, less romantic, more pressurised, more rigid, more directed -especially towards literacy and numeracy- than early childhood in Wales" (David, 1998).

2.7. Children in Reception classes

Reception classes, although catering for pre-school children, mark the beginning of formal schooling. Attendance is normally full day, adult-child ratios are far lower than in the nursery sector and the classrooms are set within the main school, often having less direct access to an outdoor play area. Routines tend to be more school-like as Reception classes are integrated into the main body of the school and its timetable. Reception class children are likely to share playtimes, lunches and access to outdoor play areas with their older schoolmates.

But lack of consensus over which criteria to adopt in evaluating pre-school settings has led to conflicting assessments of Reception classes. Ofsted (Ofsted, 1998a) argued strongly in their defence, with a bias in their favour when compared to provision offered to four-year-olds in nursery. Guided by the Desirable Outcomes this report drew upon evidence from inspections of a wide range of government funded institutions catering for four-year-olds. "The provision for four-year-olds in the great

majority of Reception classes inspected throughout the year is judged to be satisfactory or better and compares well to the provision for four-year-olds in Nursery classes. The work in the latter, although generally at least satisfactory, is sometimes limited because teachers do not extend and challenge sufficiently those children who have achieved the Desirable Outcomes" (Ofsted, 1998a p.7).

The claim that "Attainment and progress are satisfactory or better in over 90% of Reception classes" (Ofsted, 1998a p.15) must be considered against Ofsted's own evaluative criteria, reflected in its discourse. The positive evaluation of educational provision in Reception classes was within a framework of *'work'*, based on the yardstick of Desirable Outcomes and endorsed by baseline assessment. The evaluative criteria included targets of language and literacy which have now been formally established as part of the Early Learning Goals of the Foundation Stage. The following are recommendations for what children should aim to achieve prior to entering school at the statutory age of five:

- Hear and say initial and final sounds in words and short vowel sounds within words
- Link sounds to letters naming and sounding the letters of the alphabet
- Use their phonic knowledge to write simple regular words and make phonetically plausible attempts at more complex words
- Encourage children to apply their knowledge of sounds to what they write
- Read a range of familiar and common words and simple sentences independently
- Give children extensive practice in writing letters (Q.C.A., 2000).

These initiatives, together with the pressure of SATs at KS1, persuade schools and the parent body to begin formal education at an ever earlier stage. But these priorities are not shared by other European countries and many would challenge the appropriateness of Ofsted's advice: "Overall, there is a need for a better understanding of how to promote early literacy skills and for a more carefully planned approach to ensure that the good work being done to promote speaking and listening is extended to include reading and writing" (Ofsted, 1998a).

Ofsted's report stands in sharp contrast to a decade of concern about the nature of pre-school provision within the Reception class, what Sharp termed the mis-match "between provision offered in Reception class and the developmental needs of the younger four-year-old child" (Sharp & Hutchinson, 1997 p.8).

In 1987 Osborn and Milbank's longitudinal study (Osborn & Milbank, 1987) questioned the rationale for admission to infant classes at four and found that such early entry had little benefit. Concerns aired at a NFER/SCDC seminar held that same year (NFER/SCDC, 1987) were constantly re-iterated in the years that followed.

West and Varlaam suggested that Reception classes generally did not offer a child-oriented environment such as that found in a good nursery (West & Varlaam, 1990). Issues such as playtimes, lunchtimes, the size of a school building can all contribute to the problems associated with early entry to school.

Sestini reviewed the comparative provision of 10 Nursery classes and 20 Reception classes (Sestini, 1987). There were clear distinctions between the two settings in terms of staffing, provision, curriculum and levels of involvement in activities. These generally favoured a nursery setting. Stevenson (Stevenson, 1987) also identified problems associated with the reception class setting drawn from a study whose findings were based on detailed observations of the youngest child in 24 infant classes. Stevenson recorded her observations with camera, tape-recorder and notes. She also interviewed staff members and collected written material from them. The problems she identified included resources, the lack of access to outside play areas except during playtime or PE, the low adult to child ratio, the emphasis on the 3Rs and the pressure felt by teachers in this direction.

Addressing the same issue, Bennett and Kell established that 40% of four-year-olds were entering school. Their study assessed the conditions these children encountered and the results "provided little grounds for optimism" (Bennett & Kell, 1989 p.76), more so because they were felt to represent the broad picture of Reception class

education for four-year-olds. Data was collected from head teachers and a minimum of one teacher of four year-olds in each of 60 schools in three LEAs. Subsequently observations were made on children in six schools from each authority. Only a quarter of teachers had appropriate training and widespread dissatisfaction was noted with levels of resourcing in terms of equipment, materials, space, access and staffing.

The level of teacher training for Reception class children has been a consistent source of concern: "Studies have consistently found that the majority of teachers working with four year-olds in Reception classes were not trained to teach children under five" (Pugh, 1996).

Bennett and Kell considered the impact of these conditions on the quality of children's learning experiences. As in previous studies there was criticism of quality in terms of play curriculum, adult involvement and general class management. Most factors were felt to be outside the control of teachers. "LEAs must now begin to debate the issue of the four-year-olds in school more urgently and attempt to throw off the mantle of ambivalence and seeming indifference" (Bennett & Kell, 1989 p.88).

A major review of provision for the under-fives undertaken by the RSA resulted in a report, which was extremely critical of the quality of provision available. "It fails to meet the needs of either children or parents. It is unevenly and inequitably distributed. It does not provide an assurance of high quality" (Ball, 1994 p.31). "Reception classes in primary schools run the risk of imposing an inappropriate curriculum with insufficient and non-specialist staff" (Ball, 1994 p.31-32). Hampshire County Council was following the trend for earlier admission to school when in 1993 it began to take children in to school from the September of the academic year in which they turned five. An evaluation of this new policy in 1995 highlighted some of the problems identified in the RSA report: "If early entry to school is to have a beneficial effect on children's literacy, it is important for them to spend more time reading, sharing and discussing books, and less time on duplicated work-sheets and teacher directed writing tasks" (Drummond, 1995 p.14). The report which was based on 50

hours of observation found that over 50% of the time observed was spent on reading, writing and mathematical activities, the 'basic skills'.

A report by the National Association for the Education of Young Children in the USA expressed concerns for the trend it acknowledged "toward increased emphasis on formal instruction in academic skills" (Bredekamp, 1991 p.1). This trend, it argued, was the result of misconceptions about how young children learn. "In many cases, concerned adults, who want children to succeed, apply adult educational standards to the curriculum for young children and pressure early childhood programmes to demonstrate that children are "really learning" (Bredekamp, 1991 p.51).

It set down guidelines for "developmentally appropriate practice" in terms of curriculum, adult-child interactions, relations between the home and the programme and developmental evaluation of children. This practice was set in a child-centred framework in which the curriculum stimulated equal learning in all areas, whether physical, social, emotional or intellectual. Within this framework "quality" attained a very distinctive definition from that often and increasingly applied to school settings, particularly Reception classes.

The most recent assessment of Reception classrooms as compared to other forms of pre-school provision was carried out by the EPPE project. (Sylva, 2000 p.9-10). Reception classes scored less well on the ECERS-R scale than did Nursery classes, nursery schools and combined day centres. They scored more highly than playgroups and private day nurseries on the ECERS-E scale but did not differ on this measure from other forms of state provision.

The House of Commons report on the early years found evidence that formality was encouraged by Ofsted , whose inspectors "expect to see whole-class formal teaching in the Reception year. This expectation influences teachers to adopt a formal approach to literacy throughout the Foundation Stage" (Education and Employment Committee, 2000 p.15). The report, as cited earlier, expressed concern about the potential

detrimental effects of this formality. Nevertheless, it did not recommend a change to the status quo in terms of age of entry to school. This was in contrast to the earlier RSA report, which had argued for the advantages of a later start to school. "Nations where compulsory education begins at the age of six (or even seven) are readier to recognise the importance of early learning, and to make provision for it, than those countries where it begins at five" (Ball, 1994 p.23). In Sweden, where entry at seven has been in place for over 150 years, an equivalent debate about lowering age of entry hinged on a change from seven to six. Concern was expressed that such a change might entail the introduction of inappropriate settings for six-year-olds. "The earlier the teacher takes over and begins to teach children, the worse it is for children's later development and learning" (Ingrid, 1992 p.48).

2.8. Age of entry and academic outcomes

Research offers little unequivocal support for the assumption made by many parents, that to start school early offers an educational advantage. However, the evidence against is complex and it has proved difficult to isolate the influence of the effect of age of entry to school. The high correlation between age of entry to school, season of birth and length of schooling, has made it difficult to define the effect of each factor independently. "The majority of studies looking at the effect of school entry have found differences in socialisation and academic performance between autumn- and summer-born children and between the youngest and oldest children in the USA. However, it is not certain whether these differences are the result of the children's age or the amount of schooling received" (Wiltshire, 1993). West and Varlaam carried out a survey of research, which has tried to describe and assess age of entry effects. They noted that "the majority of studies looking at time of entry to infant school show differences in performance between autumn- and summer-born children in England (and between the oldest and youngest in the USA and Sweden)" (West & Varlaam, 1990). The research literature proposes a number of explanations for these effects:

i Length of schooling

Children can receive between six and nine terms of schooling during Key Stage One. This depends on LEA policy and varies across the country.

ii Age position effects

Summer-born children remain the youngest within the year group throughout their school career

iii Starting age effects

Summer-born children start school at a younger age

iv Term of entry effects

Children who enter school in January or April are joining an already established peer group. They also experience a less favourable adult-child ratio.

v Pre-school provision

The curriculum offered in Reception class has not always been appropriate to four-year-old children.

vi Teacher expectancy

Sharp suggests that teachers may not make sufficient allowance for developmental age when judging their class (Sharp et al., 1994). This was also noted by Bell and Daniels: "There is evidence that teachers tend not to allow for this effect and may even be biased towards the older pupils in the year group" (Bell & Daniels, 1990 p.70).

Given the high correlation between these variables, it has been difficult to establish a clear causal connection between the many variables linked with age of entry and outcomes. Nevertheless, there is an abundance of evidence supporting the association between early entry to school and poorer outcomes defined by both cognitive and non-cognitive measures. This review of research literature focuses on work which has highlighted this connection.

In 1980 Davies et al. (Davies et al., 1979-80) carried out a large cross-sectional study in America with the aim of finding out whether age of entry had an effect on later school achievement. The study employed a sample of 54,000 children in grades 1, 4 and 8. Test scores of those who were five years of age on commencing school

were compared to those of children who were six. Significant differences were found between the two groups, showing a consistent advantage for those who had started at six, in tests of language, mathematics, reading and a total achievement score on the Comprehensive Test of Basic Skills. In reading, this advantage was maintained until 8th Grade.

In 1986, Russell and Startup (Russell & Startup, 1986) reviewed a body of research conducted in the 60s and 70s which indicated an association between season of birth and achievement, with the oldest, autumn-born children consistently outperforming the summer-borns. They extended the debate with their own research, which analysed the degree results of 300,000 students. The analysis suggested that the oldest, autumn-born group maintains an academic advantage until university but this advantage is lost during the university years. None of this research clarifies whether the differences are attributable to length of schooling, actual age or position in the year group. At the time of examination/testing the summer-born are always 9 to 11 months younger than the oldest group.

Bell and Daniels established age-position in the class as the main explanation for performance differences between the youngest and oldest within the year. The paper looked at results in science through secondary school and found that being the youngest had a "detrimental effect on their performance throughout their compulsory education" (Bell & Daniels, 1990).

Long-term implications of season of birth have been explored by Massey whose research suggests that one can trace effects of season of birth as far as GCSE (Massey et al., 1996). The effect does not persist to A level although there is less up-take of A level in the summer-born group (Alton & Massey, 1998). This seems to reflect a self-selection process based on previous GSCE results.

In 1988 Mortimore et al. conducted a study which included an exploration of the relationship between attitudinal outcomes and season of birth (Mortimore et al., 1988 p.125-129). Given the focus of the present research the findings are of particular interest:

- "…. a higher percentage of summer than of autumn born pupils were assessed by their teachers as having some kind of difficulty".
- Significantly more summer-born than autumn-born children held a negative attitude toward school
- In terms of attitude toward specific areas of the curriculum there was an age effect noted for mathematics, particularly in the third year. Again, summer-born children held more negative attitudes than autumn-born children. However, such differences were not evident in reading and writing.

Earlier work by Maddux had also suggested an association between birth date and school problems. The study found that there was a "disproportionate number of early-entering children among learning disabled students" (Maddux, 1980 p.81) even though these children had turned six by the time they entered school. Numerous other studies have found an association between summer-born children and children identified with learning difficulties (Pote, 1996).

In the United Kingdom studies have not reached a consensus regarding the contribution made to literacy achievement by extra schooling. Using data from 1995 Key Stage One SATs results Sharp (Sharp & Hutchinson, 1997) investigated the inter-relationships between achievement, season of birth and length of schooling. The study drew data from a national random sample of 3288 children in 114 schools, drawn from 50 LEAs in England and Wales. Statistical tests which took into account gender, SES on the basis of eligibility for free school meals, and length of schooling, showed a clear advantage in favour of the oldest age-group. The summer-born children, the youngest cohort, performed least well at KS1. However, there was a complicated relationship between the age factor and length of schooling. Summer-born children with just six terms in school performed less well in the Teacher Assessment in English than children with seven, eight or nine terms in school. For the

reading task those with six terms again did least well but those with eight terms did best. Neither the writing task nor the mathematics tasks were associated with length of schooling. Surprisingly no interaction was noted between gender and length of schooling. The findings suggest that the adoption of a policy of annual entry to school, which takes no account of age of entry, is not in the interest of the youngest cohort. However, it does not give clear answers as to the optimum entry for the summer-borns.

The research did not include children's experience prior to entering schooling so that the poorer standard of the small proportion (just 5%) of children with six terms of schooling, may have been attributable to other causes. The data from the current study, which made similar comparisons, was drawn from a sample of boys who had all experienced part-time Nursery education in Nurseries attached to schools, so sharing a common and quite similar pre-school experience.

Sharp's findings were similar to analyses of data sets collected for the Evaluation of National Curriculum Assessment at Key Stage One project, established at the University of Leeds in 1991 (Shorrocks et al., 1992). Two data sets of summer-born children were drawn from SATs results in 1991 and 1992. The sample from which these were drawn consisted of 740 children in 1991 and 925 children in 1992 of whom 51% and 54% respectively had attended nine terms of school and the rest just seven. A multi-level model was applied to outcomes in reading, writing, number and science. The model included three explanatory pupil-level variables: age, social group and gender. Results indicated that extra schooling did not benefit children as far as national tests are concerned (Daniels et al., 2000).

Tymms' examined the effect of season of birth but not of length of schooling. The study collected data from just over 1700 children at the beginning and end of the Reception class but excluded 331 children who were admitted to school in the second and third terms. Analysis revealed a large school effectiveness variable but "there was no evidence that month of birth related to reading" (Tymms, 1997 p.115). This

finding related to progress in reading rather than attainment, which *was* associated with age. This study too indicates that the younger children in the age-cohort are at a disadvantage, even when they have the same amount of schooling as the older children.

Evidence from the United States is also not conclusive. A study by Crone and Whitehurst suggested that : "The impact of a year of schooling on reading was 4.3 times stronger than the effect of age" (Crone & Whitehurst, 1999 p.604). The school cut-off age was used to select one group of children who were 'almost identical in age' but because of the cut off date had one year's difference in schooling. The youngest children in Kindergarten were compared to the oldest in Headstart. The youngest Kindergarten children outperformed the oldest in Headstart in spite of being very similar ages. However, the design failed to take into account the possible effects of position in the year-group. In the current study both the comparative groups consisted of the youngest boys in the year eliminating this potentially confounding variable.

Contrary to the findings of Crone and Whitehurst, Crosser found it was advantageous to delay entry to Kindergarten for summer birth-date children. A general academic advantage was found in fifth and sixth grade for those children who had delayed entry to Kindergarten from age five to age six (Crosser, 1991). These findings corroborate evidence from research in the United Kingdom which mainly suggests that older children tend to perform better academically than younger ones within a year group.

Evidence in favour of a later entry to school has not been reflected in practice. "The present trend favouring a longer school day and more academic instruction for five year olds, is part of a larger movement supporting the downward extension of formal schooling" (Olsen & Zigler, 1989 p.168). As in England the movement was not just pragmatic but encouraged by the belief that an early start would leave a long-term benefit. Again however, the review of research presented in this article did not offer convincing empirical evidence for such benefits. It concluded that:

i. Advantages of extended day programmes, as reflected in standardised test scores are short-lived and most evident among the disadvantaged sector.
ii. "Inappropriate training in reading skills is... more likely to impair than enhance children's inclination to read" (Olsen & Zigler, 1989 p.180).
iii. Formality introduced too soon is likely to damage the intrinsic motivation of children.
iv. The formal orientation of pre-school setting promotes an environment of success and failure where normal developmental differences are negatively labelled.

Risks of early formal education have been identified as both short and long-term. "The short-term risks derive from the stress, with all its attendant symptoms, that formal instruction places on young children; the long-term risks are of at least three kinds: motivational, intellectual, and social" (Elkind, 1986 p.634). A number of important organisations associated with early childhood education issued a joint statement of concerns about present practices in pre-first grade reading instruction. These concerns related to the formality of pre-reading programmes, the inappropriateness of expectations and experiences, and the focus on development of isolated skills. "Too little attention is placed upon reading for pleasure; therefore, children often do not associate reading with enjoyment" (Early Childhood and Literacy Development Committee of the International Reading Association, 1986 p.11)

A forceful literature both in America and the United Kingdom has suggested that placing four-year-olds in school is potentially damaging (Elkind, 1986; Zigler, 1987; Lally, 1989). Government initiatives supporting early entry have not been supported by research evidence of academic or social gains. On the contrary we have: "Evidence from research and recent publications that too formal teaching too early is not the best way forward for 4 year olds" (Dorothea, 1992 p.43). Given the general consensus on this issue, the rationale for the continuing trend towards earlier admission to school would seem to be driven primarily by pragmatic considerations. Under the pretext of raising standards, government has adopted a stance, mostly alien to practitioners, whose motives were eloquently summarised by Anning: "The language of their constituents is of accountability, quality assurance, market forces, Back to Basics"

(Anning, 1998 p.301). The pedagogy has been shaped by economic forces and found justification in an achievement-oriented environment. The underlying assumption of this pedagogy, which remains unproven, insists that academic success depends on an early start in the basic skills.

2.9. International evidence

Evidence based on international comparisons is problematic in so far as the sheer volume of variables involved in analysis often blurs useful distinctions. Given the scale necessary for such research the number of studies on which one can draw is limited.

In 1992, the IEA assessed reading in 32 different countries. Unfortunately, Great Britain was not included, so direct comparisons are not available (Elley, 1992). However, it would appear that the children in countries with a later start were at no disadvantage by the age of nine. Finland, Sweden, Norway and Iceland all begin reading instruction at seven, yet the scores for all four fell within the top ten countries. The exact relationship between age of starting school and later reading success was more difficult to establish. When economic and social differences were taken into account by a Composite Development Index, the previous relationship between age of entry and reading level was exactly reversed. This meant that the top ten countries had a starting age of 5.95 years compared with 6.40 years for the lowest ten.

A recent Dispatches programme was fiercely antagonistic to the early start policy of Great Britain describing the situation as "Disaster at Home". The study, though not presented for an academic audience, nevertheless raised some interesting issues. "The contrast between what happens in successful pre-school systems abroad and what happens here could hardly be more complete. Britain does not do — or does badly — that which elsewhere is viewed as essential ... British early years education is a

disaster that diminishes the effectiveness of the entire education system" (Mills & Mills, 1998 p.9).

The argument was based on the judged failure of children in Great Britain as compared to children in Hungary, Flemish Belgium and Switzerland. The British scene in early education was viewed as a chaotic one, lacking vision and coherence. In contrast pre-school programmes in these three countries were systematic and well-regulated. They shared certain characteristics in their methodology stressing:

- Attention, listening and memory skills
- Appropriate group behaviour
- Conceptual understanding
- Phonological awareness and motor skills
- Spoken language
- Avoidance of failure
- Complete rejection of written language in the nursery

According to this study Flemish-Belgian children who begin school at the equivalent of the British Year Two learn to read within one term. Swiss-German children develop their literacy skills slightly more slowly, partly because they learn to read and write a language which differs from the one they speak. Nevertheless, Swiss children came seventh in the IEA study (Elley, 1992).

British children would also appear to lag behind in their mathematical skills (although not in science) (Harris et al., 1997). However, the Third International Mathematics and Science Study did not address the issue of age of starting school and its relationship with later achievement. The study by Prais (Prais, 1997) pointed to the lower mathematical achievement of British as compared to Swiss children even though the Swiss children were younger and had had less school experience

2.10. Gender differences in reading achievement and attitude toward reading

There has been mounting evidence that boys perform less well than girls in English. A recent report on Gender and Educational Performance (Ofsted, 1998b) suggests that the gap has been widening. At Key Stage One in 1995, 83% of girls were performing at the required level 2 or above in English as compared to 73% of boys. SATs results from 2001 showed that at Key Stage One 88% of girls were achieving the expected levels of reading and writing compared to 80% of boys. Girls also out-performed boys at Key Stage Two. Eighty percent of girls compared to 70% of boys attained a level 4 or above (Department of Education and Skills, 2001). Sharp's work had earlier highlighted the issue of gender with girls outperforming the boys in English (Sharp & Hutchinson, 1997). In reading "The girls' average score was significantly higher than boys" (Brooks et al., 1998).

Research has also presented evidence pointing to more negative attitudes among boys, toward school in general and particular academic subjects including reading. Wigfield and Guthrie's study concluded that girls were "generally showing more positive motivation for reading" (Wigfield & Guthrie, 1997). Mc Kenna's study also found evidence that girls outperformed boys in terms of achievement and had more positive attitudes toward reading: "Gender-specific beliefs concerning what others expect about reading may explain consistent findings that girls tend to possess more positive attitudes than boys" (McKenna, 1995 p.941). McKenna suggested that these differences may be accounted for by expectations within our society. "It may be that societal beliefs lead first toward more positive attitudes toward reading in girls, which in turn facilitate an advantage over boys in acquiring ability, and that this difference in ability helps to perpetuate more positive attitudes among girls" (McKenna, 1995 p.941).

Gender-related expectations are proposed as the main barrier to boys' and girls' equal access to literacy in Millard's work with pupils in their first and second year at secondary school (Millard, 1997). The problem for education and literacy learning is

that in co-educational settings "being good at school work" is more often constructed as an attribute of girls (Millard, 1997 p.25). Millard suggests that the rejection of literacy activities has become part of boys' affirmation of their masculinity a process which begins during the very earliest years and is well-entrenched by secondary school. This is perhaps compounded by the tendency of early reading instruction to ignore boys' preferences in reading choice. Millard's work has certainly provided strong evidence for the divergence between boys and girls in both reading preferences and habits. More boys expressed a preference for adventure/action stories than did girls (24.6% of boys compared to 9.1% of girls). A larger proportion of boys than girls (35.8% compared to24%) "recorded no favourite type of reading but saw all genres as equally unappealing" giving clear indication of "boys disengagement from reading as a leisure pursuit" (Millard, 1997 p.53).

In Great Britain, the media has put the issue in the public eye and there are a considerable number of initiatives at the local school level trying to address the problem. The Channel 4 Dispatches programme (Mills & Mills, 1998) lent support to the argument that early entry to school has a more marked disadvantage for boys than it does for girls and this may contribute to the gender divide in educational achievement later in school.

The differences in both achievement and attitude by gender are an international phenomenon. The IEA study of Reading Literacy (Elley, 1994) addressed this issue. Gender differences were established both in terms of amount of voluntary reading and in achievement. At age nine, girls reported a higher frequency of voluntary book reading than boys in every country except Hong Kong. The pattern was reversed for comic reading and reading of "directions on how to make or perform something" (Elley, 1994 p.71). The study reported that girls in all 32 countries achieved better than boys.

The causes have been widely debated. Some research has suggested that boys achieved better when taught by male teachers (Elley, 1992; Elley, 1994). Others have suggested the earlier maturation of girls as a contributing factor.

The IEA study measured achievement in three domains: narrative, expository and documents. The largest differences were found in the narrative domain in almost every case. Of particular relevance to the present study was the finding that three of the six countries with the largest gender gap began formal instruction in reading at age five. In two of these countries, the boys were furthest behind at age fourteen. The IEA study concluded that: "As a starting age of five is found in only four countries, it is clearly a plausible hypothesis that boys are too immature to begin reading formally at age five, and that their difficulties are represented in low achievement, relative to girls, at both age levels" (Elley, 1992). This hypothesis was further explored in an analysis of scores on a Word Recognition Test. The differences were again "large and consistent" (Elley, 1994 p.107). "A plausible interpretation of these trends is that a policy of an earlier start in formal reading instruction is too early for many boys and implies persisting problems for them" (Elley, 1994 p.107-108).

Age of entry suggests itself as a likely explanation for at least some of the problems experienced at the beginning of school. The study of Hughes, Pinkerton and Plewis, cited earlier, presented evidence for widespread problems on entry to school, many of which would appear to be maturational. Not surprisingly, "Boys had significantly more difficulties than girls" (Hughes, 1979 p.196). Millard found that over a third of her sample of boys recalled having learned to read as a "hard" process (Millard, 1997 p.79).

The hypothesised link between age of entry to school and boys' level of achievement in reading has guided the sampling framework for the present study. This has chosen to focus on summer-born boys on the basis that any effect of age of entry to school is likely to be most pronounced in the youngest cohort.

2.11. Summary of age of entry debate

Research presents as much evidence for the detrimental effect of poor early educational experience as for the positive effect of high-quality experience. The history of early intervention programmes indicates the long-term benefit of a child-centred practice in the early years. The key factors of success lie in the building of self-esteem and offering opportunities to children to be physically active. Their learning is encouraged primarily through play. These factors are less likely to be found in school than Nursery class settings. Ball's study not only pointed to the lasting benefits of effective pre-school provision but suggested the raising of age of entry to school as one of the ways of achieving this.

Research evidence in the debate about age of entry has been drawn from both British and international studies. Most of the evidence points to the disadvantages of the current British trend towards earlier admission.

i International comparisons do not suggest that British children are achieving higher standards than their European counterparts who almost all commence school one, two or three years later

ii British research has exposed the many dangers of placing children in Reception classes at the age of four. These classes often do not meet accepted criteria for quality in early years education

iii The placement of children in inappropriate pre-school settings can lead to negative effects in the long-term

CHAPTER 3

LITERACY DEVELOPMENT IN THE HOME CONTEXT

3.1. Recognising the parental role

The early years debate has been conducted largely within the framework of 'institutions' and policies operating outside the home environment. The literature reviewed has investigated the quality of pre-school provision and the advantages of nursery versus formal school education. But the impact of pre-school/early school settings on the individual cannot be researched independently of the home setting. In terms of literacy development the home represents an equally significant "ecological microsystem" (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) within which development occurs. This chapter examines the home as a context for reading development through the concept of 'family literacy'. It highlights particular literacy events which take place in the home and evaluates their contribution to different strands of literacy development.

Reflecting Bronfenbrenner's theoretical structure, this project looks at the triangular set of relationships and interactions between children, school and home. The inter-relationship between contexts is considered as integral to their effective functioning independently: "A child's ability to learn to read in the primary grades may depend no less on how he is taught, than on the existence and nature of ties between the school and the home" (Bronfenbrenner, 1979).

Bronfenbrenner's ecologies provided the framework for the large Australian study on childrens' reading habits (Bunbury, 1995). As illustrated in table 3.1, Bronfenbrenner's four tiers of influence (column 1) were by applied by Bunbury to the educational environment (column 2). A similar framework informed the present study.

Table 3.2 sets out the ecologies as interpreted for the present study and the type of data collected from each tier of influence. It follows the relationship between broad government policy and the development of concepts at the individual pupil and parent level.

Micro system	Immediate setting containing the learner's English classroom
Meso system	Interrelation among major settings
Exo system	Institutions in larger environment — at local level, formal and informal (eg. school, community, SES)
Macro system	Ideological and structural aspects eg. systematic differences in education

Table 3.1 Bronfenbrenner's ecologies as adopted by Bunbury (Bunbury, 1995)

Bronfenbrenner's ecologies	**Ecology in terms of this study**	**Nature of data**
Macro system	Policies on admission re: age of entry	Government policy on age of entry to school
Exo system	Early education in school or nursery	LEA policies as implemented by individual schools
	Home literacy environment Including parental beliefs/expectations	Measures of literacy in the home drawn from parental interview and questionnaire Measures of SES
Meso system	Relationship between early educational settings and the home	Parental interviews exploring parental expectations about school literacy objectives for their children.
Micro system	School and home contexts for reading	Tape-recorded sessions with children Parental interviews and questionnaires

Table 3.2 Bronfenbrenner's ecologies as applied to the present study

"The last five to ten years have seen an increased recognition of the vital role the family plays in children's success at school" (Cairney, 1996). This is in part a reflection of the diversification of parents' involvement in the educational arena; in part it stems from a body of research which has described in detail the wealth of literacy experiences occurring in the home. These studies have uncovered the varied

and distinctive contributions made by parents towards their children's literacy development. Heath's work is a major landmark in our understanding of this contribution and has dominated our changing conception of home literacy practice (Heath, 1983). In contrast to earlier emphasis on the skills that children entering school might lack, Heath focused on the literacy experiences which children bring to school.

Her ethnographic study of three very different American communities searched for characteristic patterns of parent-child interaction. In describing the interaction which revolved around book reading Heath pointed to the important implications they hold for later school life and suggested how mismatches can occur. The "typical middle-class mainstream" communities of Maintown are characterised by a rigid sequential process of literacy acquisition as reflected in the sequence which governs their interaction with books: "Throughout the primary grade levels, 'what' explanations predominate, reason explanations come with increasing frequency in the upper grades, and affective comments most often come in the extra credit portions of the workbook" (Heath, 1982 p.54). Since home and school processes are well-matched, school success is guaranteed. Not so with children from the other two communities studied by Heath. Children from Trackton learn to talk but 'literacy events' such as bedtime stories simply do not exist. Children from Roadville have a highly restricted experience of literacy; there is minimal use of written instructions among the adult community and book reading is not accompanied by extensive verbal interaction. Explanations tend to be of a minimal nature and questions raised tend to be of a certain formula. The 'decontextualized' use of language is not part of the interaction process and although Roadville children can cope with the early years of schooling, they are not ready to meet the challenge of the increasing variety of school literacy and the demands this makes on them.

Heath's work represents a move away from the 'deficit' model of much interventionist research, which attempted to compensate for deprivation through external provision of resources and expertise. The assumption that the association between family background and school success was the result of a lack of appropriate

parental input was gradually replaced by the view that school failure was the result of a mismatch between the practices of home and school. The alternative 'wealth' model began to focus on a rapprochement between different cultural and linguistic traditions.

Numerous descriptive studies, on a smaller scale, have continued to portray the 'richness and variety' of home literacy experiences (Taylor, 1983; Raban-Bisby, 1995). Taylor carried out a case study of six white American middle class families giving a portrait of 'family literacy' where the parent lay at the heart of each child's successful literacy experience. The term referred to the "interplay of literacy activities of children, parents and others" (Hannon, 1999 p.122).

In the study of 30 four-year-old girls at home and at school by Tizard and Hughes (Tizard & Hughes, 1984), observational evidence painted the home as a strong learning environment. Five significant factors were proposed. All have a bearing on the influence of home environment on children's literacy development. There is an extensive range of activities in the home, unparalleled in the school setting. These activities all provide opportunities for learning. Parent and child share the same life very intimately. This helps the parent to understand the child but also to extend his/her understanding of the world around by relating present experiences to a relevant past and future. The home generally offers a better ratio of adults to children within which a child has more opportunities to talk and to ask questions. The close relationship between mother and child allows the child to express herself more freely than would normally occur in a school setting. Finally, learning is embedded in contexts which have meaning for children. While the learning potential of family settings is not always fully realised, the home offers a powerful learning environment.

Weinberger's longitudinal Elmswood study gave a detailed picture of children's rich home literacy experiences at ages three and then seven (Weinberger, 1993; Weinberger, 1996). The data and the conclusions drawn from it pointed again to the eclectic nature and positive contribution of home literacy experience to children of all backgrounds. "While there was a wide variety of experience between families with

many providing rich and complex environments for literacy, and a few offering less, all the children had literacy experiences at home" (Weinberger, 1993 p.281).

Minns' small qualitative study following just five children from pre-school into school is entrenched in a tradition which puts recognition of home literacy at the heart of successful education outside the home (Minns, 1997).

Barton disseminated a similar message "We were struck by the wide diversity of literacy which goes on in the home" (Barton, 1996 p.55). Although in many cases home literacy is distinctive from school literacy it should not be viewed as an inferior literacy. Barton argues for a wider recognition of parental contribution in this area, "Parents are experts on their own experiences. Rather than intervene in families, teachers and others need to investigate together the reality of literacies in homes and communities" (ibid. p66).

On the basis of these studies and the conclusions they draw, the key to early and prolonged failure in school need not lie in the impoverishment of the home but in a mismatch between home and school. Schools must acknowledge and work with multiple literacies if they are to succeed. As research continues to expand our conception of literacy, there is a growing need to look at ways of meeting patterns which do not conform to the requirements of institutional demands and to form bridges between home and school cultures which maintain respect for both.

A small-scale project by Kathryn Kohl, while restricted by size in conclusive evidence, portrays how such mismatches occur (Kohl, 1995). Kohl followed 18 children from two terms prior to entry into a Reception class, until one term after entry. Data from tapes, interviews, observational notes and samples of children's writing and drawing reflected the contrast in literacy of a home-based nature to that which is school-based. Kohl concludes that the literacy data collected points to "gaps between their home and school experiences". These mismatches can occur in a number of ways. "Only when early patterns of learning are consistent with, or can be

attached to those used in school are children likely to benefit from the instruction provided there" (Langer, 1991 p.31). Their reconciliation depends upon understanding the distinctive features of both settings. Yet Weinberger claimed that, "The extent of home literacy experiences for the majority of children is barely recognised or acknowledged by school" (Weinberger, 1993 p.296).

Detailed ethnographic studies during the 1980s and 1990s have described the diversity of literacy practices occurring in the home. Recognition of this evidence, however, demanded a re-examination of the teacher's role in children's literacy development, which was not always welcomed.

Many view the Plowden report as the launching pad for educational initiatives aimed at drawing together parent and teacher. In the early 1980s projects such as PACT, Parents and Children and Teachers, (Hancock, 1995; Hancock & Gale, 1996) began to recognize parental contribution to literacy, but time was needed to gradually break down the professional monopoly of literacy held by teachers. Hancock openly acknowledged the prevalent lack of knowledge about home literacy. "It is actually a complex and difficult phenomenon for a researcher to study because it can be subtly integrated into the web of family interactions which not only involve parents, other adults and children but also the many unobserved interactions between siblings" (Hancock, 1995 p.244). An uneasy relationship characterised the parent-teacher relationship during the 1970s and '80s with teachers expressing grave reservations about parents becoming involved in any sort of direct teaching. In the study by Tizard and Hughes, nearly half of the teachers thought that parents made no contribution to the children's education at all (Tizard & Hughes, 1984). Meek assigned the parental role to the motivational sphere. While she viewed the teaching of skills as primarily the teacher's role, the parents' role is "to encourage the child to believe that reading is a worthwhile and pleasurable thing to do" (Meek, 1982 p.74). This hypothesis was reflected in a small intervention programme carried out in two schools between September 1995 and January 1996 (Lippe & Weber, 1996). Parental involvement was identified as a key factor in increasing intrinsic reading motivation. Participating pupils were asked to take home book bags, which included a book to be read aloud as

well as an accompanying activity. Data, including parental feedback, seemed to suggest an increase in motivation.

The Haringey and Belfield projects were research initiatives, which played a major part in highlighting the potential effect of a specific type of parental involvement, hearing children read. Both studies showed that children made significant advances in reading test scores when parents listened to them read (Hewison & Tizard, 1980; Hannon & James, 1990). The results continue to be quoted as evidence on behalf of this type of parent input although the claims have been subject to gradual erosion (Toomey, 1993; Macleod, 1996). In a second study, Hannon failed to reproduce similar findings. The somewhat contradictory findings of two such significant studies are subject to various critiques and explanations. Toomey argues that unguided parent listening, "does little to help children most at risk of reading failure" (Toomey, 1993 p.223). Macleod described fundamental design faults in both pieces of research. Hannon has challenged the validity of the reading test scores as an exclusive outcome measure and remained uncertain whether these reflect how well children can read. He returned to a discussion of some of the problems associated with reading tests elsewhere (Hannon, 1995 Ch.9).

Whatever the explanations given for these inconclusive results, the Belfield project concluded that the "... research provided some evidence that increased parental involvement changed children's attitude to reading and learning but there needs to be research which explores the issue more directly" (Hannon & Jackson, 1987b p.24).

Many partnership projects were trialled and teaching practice in tandem with research moved towards a view of literacy which, to varying degrees, incorporated parents and teachers as contributors towards literacy development. Paired reading, as developed by Topping, was based on the premise that parents could offer much that teachers could not: "the availability of extra practice", "the luxury of one-to-one immediate feedback", "parental praise...more powerful in general than that of a teacher" and "greater scope for modelling or demonstration of the desired behaviour" (Wolfendale

& Topping, 1996 p.45). Initiatives such as family reading groups also resulted from the acknowledgement of parent potential in this sphere.

A shift in perception of teaching roles took place internationally. "In the past teachers have been reluctant to relinquish their power over children's learning by even acknowledging the important educative role of homes and parents" (Spreadbury, 1995). The Australian Parents and Literacy Project, initiated by Spreadbury, is an example of family literacy initiatives which have set aside the monopoly of teachers in teaching.

The 1990s witnessed a clear expansion of the parental role with more than just theoretical backing. As Wolfendale pointed out, the active involvement of parents in school-life has become a performance indicator. Its mandatory status both fosters and is recognition of its importance (Wolfendale & Topping, 1996).

3.2. The place of joint parent-child storybook reading within family literacy practices

In spite of the frequent claims made for the diversity of literacy practices in the home, joint storybook reading has tended to dominate the concept of early childhood home literacy. The accumulation of our knowledge about the wide range of literacy practices in the home has resulted in a subtle shift in the status accorded to this particular practice. Barton, while not negating its value, was prepared to challenge it, "...if it is to be the predominant representation of family literacy" (Barton, 1996). An international gathering on family literacy led to the publication of a volume of articles by leading specialists in the field, all emphasising the importance of recognising the range of literacy practices which occur in the home setting: "Within family settings there are both multiple literacies and multiple literacy practices" (Taylor, 1997 p.1). But literacy as formulated by government policy, as transmitted via the National Curriculum and the literacy hour and ultimately as assessed by schools, has retained book reading as a central feature. The current project reflects these strong institutional

concerns by focussing predominantly on book-reading habits and responding to some of the problems engendered by a policy guided by this particular conception of literacy.

The focus on book reading is also part of an established tradition of reading research. Joint storybook reading has a central place in research concerned with parental contributions to children's literacy. It has engendered numerous initiatives in the field of family literacy and has served a useful purpose in the rapprochement between teacher and parent roles. For the researcher it has offered a time-condensed opportunity to observe and analyse parent-child interaction in the context of literacy development.

Two major reviews arrived at overlapping but distinctive conclusions.

Bus, Van Ijzendoorn and Pellegrini, (Bus et al., 1995) carried out a quantitative meta-analysis of empirical evidence to establish whether joint book reading is the single most important contributor towards children's eventual success in reading. The analysis examined 29 studies, which had assessed the impact of frequency of joint stroybook reading. It employed three types of outcome measures: language growth, emergent literacy and reading achievement. Although Bus and her colleagues recognised that joint storybook reading might increase children's interest in books, provide children with factual information and develop their awareness of letter-sound relationships, they suggested that the main interest in the activity stems from the belief that it "stimulates a literate orientation" (Bus et al., 1995 p.2). Evidence from studies has suggested that joint storybook reading helps children to become familiar with the written language register before they acquire the mechanical skills of decoding print. "The overall effect size of d=0.59 indicates that book reading explains about eight percent of the variance in the outcome measures" (Bus et al., 1995 p.15). The effect of frequency of book reading is no less in families of lower SES.

The meta-analysis gave clear backing to the central status of joint storybook reading among family literacy practices. " Our analysis provides a clear and affirmative

answer to the question of whether or not storybook reading is one of the most important activities for developing the knowledge required for eventual success in reading" (Bus et al., 1995 p.15).

The conclusions of the less quantitative study by Scarborough and Dobrich (Scarborough & Dobrich, 1994) were not contradictory but less emphatic. The association between reading to pre-school children and language and literacy skills "...is probably not as strong and consistent as is generally supposed" (Scarborough & Dobrich, 1994 p.285) . The review offered only cautious backing to the value of shared book reading in terms of literacy achievement and yet quoted the same statistics. "These results suggest that there is indeed an association between literacy outcomes and reading to pre-schoolers but that it probably accounts outright for no more than about eight percent of the overall variance in achievement" (Scarborough & Dobrich, 1994 p.262). Moreover Scarborough and Dobrich did not find a relationship between joint storybook reading and emergent literacy skills or oral language development.

Several methodological characteristics distinguish the two studies, which may explain the areas of difference. The review by Scarborough and Dobrich was not a quantitative meta-analysis. The sample sizes of individual studies included were therefore much smaller than the composite figures employed by Bus and her colleagures a fact which could explain the lack of significant effects. It must also be noted that Bus et. al. used a more extensive body of research in their study.

The Scarborough and Dobrich study has been criticised on a number of counts (Lonigan, 1994). It ignored the varying quality of the studies under scrutiny. It failed to recognise the direct and indirect links between storybook reading and literacy development and under-estimated the long-term consequences of reading to pre-schoolers.

Taking into account the methodological problems associated with the study of Scarborough and Dobrich, and their own partial acknowledgement of the role of joint storybook reading, research points to the significance of this particular activity within family literacy. The following section assesses its contribution by focusing on the most prominent ways in which joint storybook reading can lead to successful literacy development.

3.3. Storybook reading and language development

The unique quality of one to one storybook reading has been suggested as an important contributing factor to many branches of language development: vocabulary acquisition, use of expressive language and comprehension. Feitelson and Goldstein (Feitelson & Goldstein, 1986) looked at patterns of book reading in different types of family in Israel and suggested that the intimate knowledge of the child allowed a parent to "mediate between the text and the child". Feitelson identified three phases in reading development (Shimron, 1994). The first was the 'pre-reading' phase, the second was the acquisition of decoding skills and the third, an almost open ended phase, was that of post-decoding reading acquisition. In the first of these phases, the unique emotional ties between adult and child create an interaction which constantly creates opportunities for intellectually stimulating activities with language at their core. As these opportunities present themselves the adult adopts an explanatory role broadening both general and word-related knowledge.

Belief in the effectiveness of joint storybook reading in terms of language development has led to attempts at replication within the classroom setting. StaR (Story Telling and Retelling) was set up during the pilot year of a school improvement project, Success for All, 1986-87 (Karweit, 1994). This interventionist programme was modelled on the natural interactions that take place around joint storybook reading in the home which were believed to be more interactive than such sessions in school. "The interactions and conversations about the story are seen as instrumental in generating positive effects on language development." An evaluation of the programme was carried out using a control/experimental group design with 43

children in each group. Several tests of language development were administered both at the beginning and end of the year. A significant difference was found with STaR children achieving higher results. Interactions were observed in STaR classrooms but access to non-STaR classrooms was not available and no comparison of the observational data was possible. The project nevertheless gave considerable backing to the effectiveness of the type of interactive interaction which can take place more easily in the context of the home than in a school environment.

Whitehurst and his colleagues designed a home-based intervention to maximise the potential contribution of joint storybook reading to language development. This intervention was based on the assumption that such sessions can provide " a rich opportunity for children to learn language" (Whitehurst et al., 1988 p.552). From a sample size of 30, two groups were randomly assigned to either the experimental group or the control group. Parents in the experimental group were trained to ask questions which were more linguistically demanding in terms of response. These included an increase in the number of open-ended questions and fewer questions that could be answered by pointing. Parents were also asked to diminish the amount of straight reading of the text. All families audiotaped the sessions and the study found that parents had followed the instructions as requested. The children in the experimental group scored significantly higher than the control group in terms of their expressive language ability. They also had a higher MLU (mean length of utterance), a higher frequency of phrases and a lower frequency of single words.

This type of reading is rarely replicated in institutional settings such as day care centres, nurseries or classrooms. Arnold and Whitehurst suggested that although the ratio of adult to child may sometimes be sufficient for the activity to take place in these settings, adults are rarely engaged simultaneously in instructional tasks (Arnold & Whitehurst, 1994). The study suggested that the quality of storybook reading in the home is more likely to produce effects on language development, though here too considerable variation in quality is an inhibiting factor. In this context appropriate modification of parental behaviour could contribute substantially to language improvement.

The issue was investigated further by Senechal, who felt that the Whitehurst study lacked 'specificity': "it is impossible to know which parental behaviours contributed to children's learning because the intervention program was designed to bring about broad changes in the parents' reading behaviour" (Senechal, 1993 p.361). Senechal's research looked at "whether a single reading of a storybook between an adult and a pre-school child could be sufficient to produce vocabulary growth" (Senechal, 1993 p.361). It also assessed the relative value of four different types of reading behaviour: questioning, recasting, repetition and reading a story verbatim. Interestingly the results showed that children's active participation in the storybook reading did not boost their acquisition of vocabulary although a single reading did contribute to their acquisition of receptive vocabulary.

In a later study Senechal researched the relative effect of story reading and parental teaching on outcomes in oral and written language (Senechal et al., 1998). These two types of parental involvement were uncorrelated but both had a positive correlation with oral and written language skills in kindergarten children. By Grade 1 storybook reading only correlated with oral language skills.

Notwithstanding the considerable variation in the nature of joint storybook reading and inevitably its outcomes, it is a home literacy event which undoubtedly contributes to children's language development. As such it can be considered as a single but significant strand within the multiple literacies of the home.

3.4. Motivational implications of joint storybook reading

"Children whose early encounters with literacy are enjoyable are more likely to develop a pre-disposition to read frequently and broadly in subsequent years" (Baker et al., 1997 p.69).

The importance of the emotional dimension of parent-child interaction to learning in general was explored in several chapters of Early Child Education edited by

Desforges (Desforges, 1989). The intensity of the relationship, the shared knowledge base and the one-to one nature of the interaction were suggested as possible explanatory factors for its power.

Dunn commented that: "In general, serious consideration must be given to the emotional salience of any of the children's encounters at home" (Dunn, 1989 p.74). Perhaps because of the familiarity the parent, in particular the mother, has with the child's interests, interactions take on a uniquely individual flavour which cannot be replicated outside the home. Dunn suggested that: "For the great majority of children in the pre-school years it is likely that communication that takes place in an individual rather than a group setting is more supportive of learning." She supports her argument further with evidence from the work of Tizard and Hughes (Tizard & Hughes, 1984) who compared girls in home and school settings. "The same children who were such active intellectuals at home with their mothers were chiefly passive__ even dumb __ at school" (Dunn, 1989 p.77).

Similar findings were reported by Spreadbury who targeted the study of parent-child interaction during the transition period which begins with children as dependent readers and ends with children as independent readers, a period she claimed was "neglected by researchers in early literacy." (Spreadbury, 1995 p.212). She followed a sample of 25 children from the end of their pre-school year to the end of Grade 1 by which point one child had left the study. Of the 26 children participating at the beginning of Grade 1, 16 were six years old, nine were five-year-olds and one child was seven.

Several interesting findings emerged from the study. First, it brought further evidence of the immense range of styles with which parents interact with their children. It showed high correlations between particular styles of interaction and later levels of reading, forcefully suggesting the significance of reading aloud to pre-schoolers. Of equal importance was the change in interaction following the child's entry into school. "The decrease in interaction from the pre-school reading to the Grade 1

reading can be seen at the non-interactive end of this continuum ... The amount of child comment at the Grade 1 reading fell to a highly significant degree, which may suggest that even after one year of formal schooling, children have learned to be passive listeners of stories, not actively interacting with either the person reading the text or the text itself" (Spreadbury, 1995 p.216).

There is an apparent discrepancy in behaviour between home and school. Some have observed an increase in extrinsic motivation at the expense of intrinsic motivation. The home is a non-competitive environment where there is less comparison with peers. The difference in adult-child ratio is another explanatory factor. But more than that, fostering the love of reading requires the recognition and support of the child's individual interests, a process which often takes place naturally in the home environment but which needs specific intervention elsewhere. This is accompanied by a natural adaptation to the child's language by parents which also sustains the uniqueness of the interaction (Spreadbury, 1995).

Baker et al. reviewed the growing literature of home influences on children's motivations for reading (Baker et al., 1997). This review drew extensively on findings of the Early Childhood Project, a longitudinal study involving some 68 children and their families. A number of works were cited in support of the statement that a "consensus has emerged" that storybook reading contributes not only to knowledge about reading but to children's feelings about reading and its uses (Baker et al., 1997 p.74). While empirical evidence is limited "it is clear that the affective dimensions of shared storybook reading are particularly important contributors to the development of motivation for reading" (Baker et al., 1997 p.76).

Research relating the affective aspect of storybook reading to children's motivation was carried out as part of the Early Childhood Project. Thirty kindergarten children were observed reading with the person they were most likely to read with at home. In half the cases this was the mother or another adult, while in the other half it was a sibling. Sessions were video taped and a score was derived on the basis of coding

social/affective aspects of the interaction and the engagement of the child. A regression analysis established that the affective environment predicted the reading motivation score as measured on the Reading Motivations Scale. The scale, developed within this project, assessed four dimensions of reading motivation: enjoyment of reading, the value of reading, self-concept as a reader and interest in library-related activities. The authors concluded that "children who have more positive interactions surrounding storybook reading in kindergarten are more motivated to read in first grade" (Baker et al., 1997 p.75).

If, as would appear, parent-child interaction successfully fosters intrinsic motivation, the repercussions of an early transition to school on the attitudinal aspect of literacy development must be considerable. Certainly the research would seem to provide evidence supporting those who have viewed parent-child interaction in joint storybook reading as a model which should enhance literacy practices within pre-school and early school settings.

3.5. Parental influence on children's literacy development: a broader context

In spite of the dominant position of joint storybook reading in the research literature, there is a growing awareness of parental contributions to children's literacy development in a far broader sphere. In a review of projects focusing on parental involvement, Wolfendale presented literacy objectives, which were more far-reaching than any explored previously. Literacy was identified as a potential tool of empowerment, its objectives the acquisition of "literacy for life". "Family literacy is about education not schooling ...empowerment not remediation" (Wolfendale & Topping, 1996 p.149).

Parents provide the context in which the children can make genuine use of their literacy and parent-child interactions, the dynamic for this progression. In a case study of six white middle-class American families Taylor wrote: "Even when parents quite unconsciously introduced their children to print, the words were locked in the context

of the situation" (Taylor, 1983). Weinberger's longitudinal study of 42 children concluded: " Much parental teaching of literacy skills occurred in response to particular events or situations, was directly relevant to the child and was embedded in ordinary day-to-day activities" (Weinberger, 1993 p.282).

Weinberger's study (Weinberger, 1993) described the diversity of contexts in which literacy was observed. Her study offered a useful framework for the analysis of parents' influence on their children's literacy development. This framework (Fig. 3.1) was drawn from earlier work with Hannon and has since been trialled as a practical tool to increase teachers' use of parental potential (Hannon & Nutbrown, 1997). The support provided by parents for children's literacy was seen to lie in four areas: "*opportunities* for learning; *recognition* of the child's achievement; *interaction* around literacy activities; and a *model* of literacy" (Hannon, 1995). Known as ORIM, the framework has been put forward as a useful way of describing "existing patterns of family literacy" (Hannon & Nutbrown, 1997 p.409). A comprehensive description of its features can be found in the cited references and need not be re-iterated here. For the purposes of the present study, the framework has guided the investigation of the parental context in which the boys' early literacy development takes place, informing the collection of data through interviews and questionnaires.

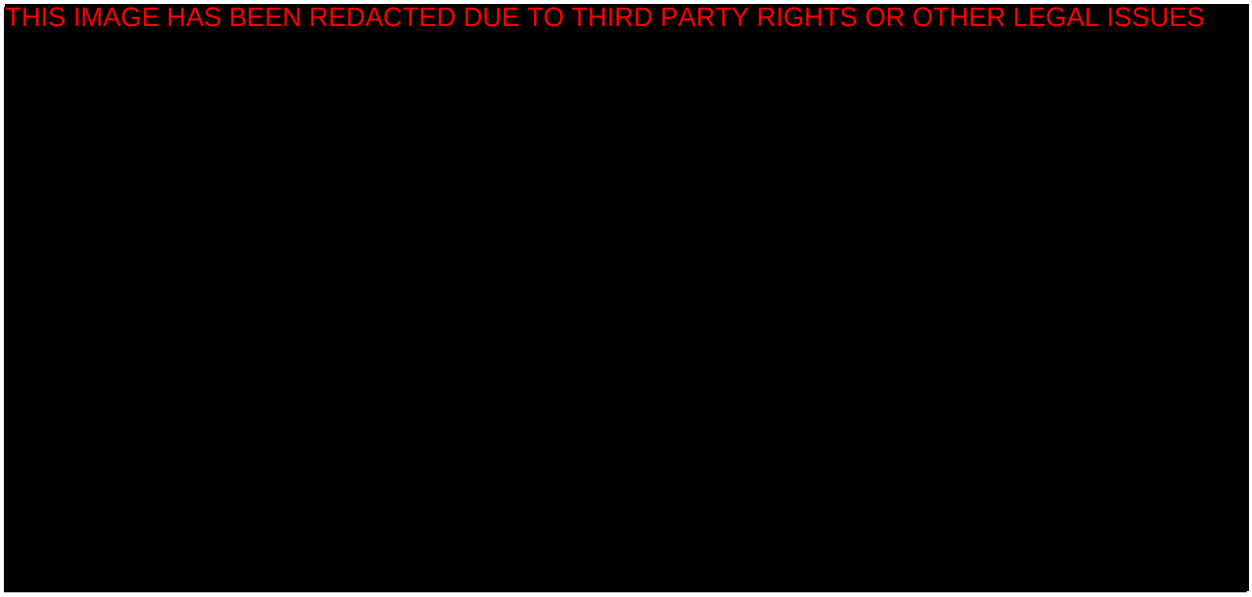


Figure 3.1. A framework for looking at the influence of parents on their children's literacy development (Weinberger, 1996 p.144)

3.6. Parental beliefs and literacy outcomes

Children's early literacy experiences in the home are predominantly generated by parents. They are thus subject to diverse cultural and economic influences, which result in an enormous diversity of experience for the pre-school child. These experiences are partly moulded by parental beliefs and there has been some, albeit limited, research into how these beliefs might mediate children's literacy experiences. Findings from The Early Childhood Project were analysed to explore parental beliefs about literacy and how these related to home literacy experiences and children's competence in emergent literacy skills (Sonnenschein et al., 1997). Forty one children and their families were involved in this study. Parents were asked to keep a diary of their children's activities during the course of a week at the commencement of the study.

Interviews were conducted soon after to try to gauge the frequency of literacy-related activities engaged in by the child. Several months later parents were interviewed about their beliefs about the purpose of learning to read and ways of helping their own children to read. Children were given a range of tasks in the spring of their pre-kindergarten and kindergarten years, assessing their emergent literacy skills. Parental beliefs were defined by the coding structure which reflected either an entertainment perspective or a skills oriented perspective. Children in families reflecting the former showed greater competence in emergent literacy skills.

An over emphasis on didactic skills, or the premature introduction of these skills, may well affect children's motivation for reading. "Responding to child-initiated reading activities if and when they occur during the course of play or other routine activities seems more likely to foster the development of positive motivations for reading" (Baker et al., 1997 p.78).

According to research carried out by Stipek et al. (Stipek et al., 1992) parental beliefs about appropriate early education for their children, mirror the general debate between those who favour the early introduction of academic skills with a teacher-centred methodology and those who believe that children's activities in the early years should

be child-centred, emphasising process rather than product. The research employed a sample of 551 parents of children in either pre-school or kindergarten. Analysis of the response to a questionnaire developed for the purposes of this study, established that parents did differ in terms of a coherent set of beliefs related to the teaching of early skills. "Parents who believed that basic skills instruction should be introduced early tended also to believe in the value of teacher-controlled approaches that involved repetition and evaluation of performance outcomes" (Stipek et al., 1992 p.305). Although no observations of parents were conducted, the beliefs predicted the type of learning activities that parents claimed they carried out in the home. The research also investigated associations between the type of early educational programme attended by children and parental beliefs and learning-related activities in the home. For kindergarten, but not for pre-school children, both beliefs and activities were associated with the type of educational establishment attended. On the basis of a full day observation of all 50 classrooms three clusters of programmes had been identified:

i. Child-centred programmes consistent with constructivist theories of child development
ii. Programmes emphasising basic skills, evaluation and performance outcome
iii. Programmes combining approaches described in 1 and 2 above

Parents who had chosen didactic kindergartens for their children were more likely to believe in the value of teacher-centred programs stressing performance outcomes. They were also more likely to carry out formal learning activities in the home and less likely to stress informal over formal activities. Parents of children in type 3 programmes were in-between and significantly different from the other two groups in terms of both beliefs and activities. While the results demonstrated an association between parental beliefs/ practices in the home and the type of program for which children were enrolled, the direction of the relationship could not be determined. However, in cases where parents did not chose their children's school, the relationship between parental beliefs/practices was not strong and in one case showed a negative association. Parents of children in 'didactic' kindergartens held the lowest scores on the 'didactic beliefs sub-scale'. This could demonstrate a negative response to didactic methodology adopted in the early years.

The findings of Stipek et al. (Stipek et al., 1992) were not conclusive and the nature of this relationship is explored further in the present study. In this sample parents have children in either a Nursery or a Reception class, according to LEA policy. The choice of class is therefore not a parental decision. This study adopts the didactic sub-scale developed by Stipek et al. (Stipek et al., 1992) and also uses interview data to investigate whether parental beliefs about early literacy development vary according to the type of educational establishment in which the child is enrolled. Such a difference would suggest that the institution influences parental beliefs rather than the influence acting in the opposite direction.

3.7. Summary

Children's literacy development occurs within a number of inter-related environments theoretically formulated through Bronfenbrenner's ecologies. (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). The vital role of the home context has been highlighted through an extensive literature that throws light on the way in which parents and families contribute to this development. This study focuses on reading development in the context of the dynamics between early school environments and the home. It investigates and reflects on how parents view their child's reading development and how parents assess both their own and the school's contribution.

CHAPTER 4

A RATIONALE FOR THE STUDY OF ATTITUDE TOWARD READING

4.1. Attitudinal objectives in education and research

The value of attitudinal objectives within educational institutions is widely recognised. Most school statements of aims and objectives include the so-called 'soft' attitudinal targets alongside those measured in traditional ways. Examples drawn from the written statements of a few primary schools in the London Borough of Hillingdon serve as an illustration:

- " to develop such attitudes as perseverance, open-mindedness, curiosity, responsibility and self-criticism." (Breakspear Infant School)
- " to encourage children to have a positive attitude toward themselves, other children, adults, their school and the environment." (Frithwood Primary School)
- " We expect children to have a high standard of behaviour and a positive attitude to learning" (Hillingdon Education Service, 1995 p.18).

In terms of reading, neither teaching strategies nor assessments have done justice to these broader aims. While manifest in every reading-encounter between teacher and pupil, the attitudinal dimension of reading is rarely addressed by either teacher or researcher, with the same systematic approach as that applied to the acquisition of reading skills. Attitudinal judgements are made and often unquestioned in both formal educational and home settings. The teacher's view of his/her pupil's attitude is taken for granted in written reports, while familiarity with the attitudes of the other is perceived as an integral part of the relationship between parent and child. Yet, there appears to be little evidence to support the reliability of teachers' intuitive judgements. A paper presented at the BERA annual conference (Feiler & Webster, 1997) suggested that, "judgements tend not to be made on a rational, systematic basis, but are often formed rapidly and intuitively, from a limited set of cues". While these judgements referred to general predictions of young children's literacy outcomes, one

can assume the same applies to their judgements of children's attitudes toward literacy.

In research, attitudinal studies have played a secondary role to that dedicated to the cognitive dimension of the acquisition and process of reading. Mathewson referred to the fluctuating trends in research on attitude and reading (Mathewson, 1994) but suggested a "resurgence of interest" after a "quiescent" period. Certainly this volume reflected a greater balance of cognitive and attitudinal research traditions (Ruddell et al., 1994) than its predecessors.

The development of this branch of reading research has been hindered by a lack of suitable measures. Nevertheless, as argued by Athey: "There is probably little disagreement today, even among the most fervent advocates of a cognitive-linguistic view of reading, that affective factors play a role both in reading achievement and reading behaviour" (Athey, 1985 p.527).

This research is set within a theoretical framework, which incorporates a particular conception of literacy and a model of reading acquisition in which attitude features prominently. This framework is presented in the following section of the literature review together with issues surrounding the measurement of the attitudinal dimensions of reading.

4.2. Towards a re-definition of literacy: incorporating attitudinal perspectives

A controversial paper by Street (Street, 1993), surveyed the changing perspectives of literacy as they had emerged in research and in practice by the early 1990s. Street proposed a clear dichotomy between conventional literacy, which he termed the autonomous model, and more recent concepts expressed by the term New Literacy. The former is tied to a definition of literacy as, for example, that adopted by UNESCO: " A person is literate when he (sic) has acquired the essential knowledge and skills which enable him to engage in all those activities in which literacy is required for effective functioning in his group or community" (Wolfendale & Topping, 1996). In this so-called autonomous model, literacy is viewed as a single

entity, independent of social and cultural context and subject to straightforward assessment employing a quantitative methodology. The 'New Literacy' presents a far more complex picture and has engendered much controversy. Incorporating multiple literacies under its rubric, it recognises some form of literacy among all communities and endorses the paradigms of emergent literacy and family literacy, which are adopted in this project. The concept represents an approach to understanding literacy and provides a useful backdrop to the present project. This 'literacy' demands to be viewed within the social and cultural context within which it occurs; readers cannot be separated from the society which determines the meaning of their uses of literacy. Similarly, texts are entrenched in their social/cultural context. The setting determines how: "literate knowledge is communicated __ what counts as a literate event and what literacy behaviours look like, what literacy-related values are respected and what literate habits are to be cultivated" (Langer, 1991). Within this conception, the adult becomes the mediator between learner and the context of learning and as such integral to literacy itself. In the New Literacy, literacy practices are not neutral. They are viewed as an ideological issue influenced by political stance, not as a set of skills. "Literacy practices I would take as referring not only to the event itself but to the conceptions of the reading and writing process that people hold when they are engaged in reading.... If we take literacy practices as one of the central conceptual tools for understanding literacy then we need to include not only technical skill but the fact that in using them we have conceptions about them" (Street, 1993 p.83-84).

The positions adopted vis-à-vis the New Literacy, are still controversial. Gough firmly rejected Street's theoretical paradigm standing firmly by the autonomous model (Gough, 1995). Gough's article argued against what he saw as the principal defining characteristics of the New Literacy as portrayed by Street and in his counter-claim, divested literacy of any political, social or relative dimensions.

The theoretical paradigm adopted in this study is not firmly entrenched in either camp, retaining but not confined to Gough's 'Old Literacy' definition: "the ability to read and write". It offers a perspective of literacy and a research methodology, which draws features from both 'Old' and 'New'. The project draws together quantitative and qualitative methods of assessment, recognising the validity of traditional

assessment procedures in terms of reading or vocabulary scores but enhancing our understanding of these scores with a more detailed qualitative analysis of their contexts. Above all the project is a beneficiary of the expanded boundaries of definition. It adopts a definition of literacy enhanced by the incorporation of attitudinal objectives which may be considered part of Street's "conception of the reading and writing process that people hold when they are engaged in the event" (Street, 1993 p.84).

While utilitarian arguments may legitimately justify the importance of learning to read at a basic minimum level, the desirability of positive attitudinal outcomes has been recognised in a sizeable body of reading research. In the last few years a number of major American and Australian studies have given support to the notion that not only does attitude play a critical role within the reading process but must be incorporated within the concept of literacy itself. The technical skills required of the literate person are not sufficient in themselves. These studies lend support to the notion of *aliteracy,* a term employed to describe readers who have the technical skills which would enable them to read but choose not to. Nomikou's study described a large case study analysis of reading attitudes in the classroom. The study acknowledged that reading attitudes may in some cases "lead to fluent readers who rarely chose to read, unless they have to do so" (Nomikou, 1991 p.84). Nell (Nell, 1988) cited several statistics illustrating the phenomenon of the literate non-reader and quoted a study by Barker and Escarpit (Barker & Escarpit, 1973) as follows: "It thus appears accurate to say that 'a fairly large proportion of those who are able to read, never read books". Literacy in its most comprehensive sense must incorporate both the necessary skills and the attitudinal dimensions, which lead to the employment of those skills.

With a sample of 21,000 children representing every state in Australia, The Children's Choice Project (Bunbury, 1995) stands among the largest and most comprehensive studies on children's reading habits, choices, preferences and attitudes. Through the perspective of this study attitude toward reading is no longer viewed as a welcome bonus to reading achievement, but inextricably woven into the

fabric of literacy, part of its very definition. " For members of the research team, a literate person (child, adolescent or adult,) is not only one who can read but one who chooses to read and who has established a habit of reading..." (Bunbury, 1995 p.7). Standards of literacy were judged not just by those who 'can' read' but those who 'do' read.

In another large study, which looked at results from a stratified national sample of over 18,000 children, McKenna offered a similar rationale for the study of attitudes to reading. ".... even for the fluent reader, poor attitude may occasion a choice not to read when other choices exist, a condition now generally known as *aliteracy"* (McKenna, 1995 p.934).

At local level a number of intervention studies have reflected teachers' growing concern about the problem of aliteracy (Lange, 1994; Haverty, 1996; Lippe & Weber, 1996). These studies were all triggered by a shared concern that pupils were lacking in 'intrinsic motivation' to read: "students considered reading a low priority that was time consuming and related only to school work" (Haverty, 1996 p.2).

Tension between the dominance of reading fluency and reading interest has been evident in teaching strategies as well as in research. Millard pointed to "the struggle that has always existed between literacy conceptualised as a skills-based activity with the need for disciplined practice and repetition, and literacy as a way of making meaning of the world where motivation and appropriate reading materials are seen as essential teaching resources" (Millard, 1997 p.45). According to Millard this tension was largely theoretical: "in practice, both kinds of teaching have existed side by side" (Millard, 1997 p.45). In terms of outcomes, however, successful teaching, particularly in the primary years, has been largely restricted to technical measures of reading fluency. The problems associated with this emphasis are encapsulated in the words of one boy in Millard's Year 8 sample: "I only read when I really have to, for homework and in school. I was a good reader at primary school because my teachers told me" (Millard, 1997 p.60).

4.3. The power of the attitude construct: exploring relationships between reading attitudes, habits and achievement in reading

Definitions of attitude have lent strength to the potential power of the construct. Allport stated that "Attitudes determine for each individual what he will see and hear, what he will think and what he will do" (Allport, 1954 p.22). Historically it is perhaps the power of attitude as a predictor of behaviour that has drawn so much interest. As early as 1918 Thomas and Zaniecki stressed the value of the construct's predictive qualities. "Attitudes are individual mental processes which determine both the actual and potential responses of each person in the social world" (Allport, 1954 p.23). Seventy years later the theme was still a recurrent one. "The concept of attitude, like many abstract concepts is a creation - a construct. As such, it is a tool that serves the human need to see order and consistency in what people say, think and do, so that given certain behaviours, predictions can be made about future behaviours" (Henerson, 1988 p.11).

In the lengthy and complex debate surrounding this issue (Wicker, 1972) no suggestion has been made that any one attitude consistently leads to a specific behaviour. Competing attitudes, normative beliefs or unidentified motives often disguise the specific attitude under scrutiny and inevitably distort the "predictable" behaviour. Nor is the relationship between overt behaviour and attitude uni-directional. While some suggest that attitudes determine behaviour, others observe behaviour to determine and define attitude. Several theoretical models have been proposed for the attitude-behaviour relationship. These are described in the following sections together with research providing empirical evidence for these relationships.

4.4. Theoretical models of reading acquisition including attitudinal dimensions

4.4.1. Attributes of attitude

In spite of decades of research and discussion, the attitude construct has eluded a clear consensus in definition. It stands within a plethora of overlapping terminology, which places increasing emphasis on attitude's dimensions and indicators at the expense of unanimity. In exploring the attitudinal realm research has expanded but not necessarily clarified its boundaries. Its distinctiveness continues to be obscured by its complex inter-relationship with similar entities. A recent article on children's Motivation for Reading (Wigfield & Guthrie, 1997) reflects the broad spectrum of language attached to this field. Concepts mentioned include: 'attitude', 'interest', 'motivation', 'beliefs', 'values' and 'engagement'.

Characteristically, definitions of attitude have an integral association with feelings, values and beliefs. Good's definition was typical of many "The pre-disposition or tendency to react specifically towards an object; usually accompanied by feelings and emotions" (Kennedy & Halinsky, 1975). Henerson's work on the measurement of attitudes was clearly in the same tradition. "In this book, the word attitude will be used quite broadly to describe all the objectives we want to measure that have to do with affect, values or beliefs" (Henerson, 1988 p.13).

These definitions are rooted in a well-established conceptualisation of attitude, which proposes a tripartite construct consisting of a cognitive, an affective and a behavioural component (Triandis, 1971). These elements have been incorporated into several models of reading attitude acquisition including that developed by Mathewson (Mathewson, 1994) which has guided the theoretical framework for this project.

4.4.2. The Mathewson Model

Mathewson developed a 'Model of Attitude Influence upon Reading and Learning to Read' which was revised three times (Mathewson, 1976; Mathewson, 1985; Mathewson, 1994). Like other models of reading acquisition, which have adopted attitude and beliefs as central constructs of the reading process, Mathewson applied more general theories of attitude to develop his theoretical framework for reading acquisition. In particular he adopted the traditional tri-partite attitude construct from earlier theoretical models of attitude which he saw as: "A more inclusive option, fortified by powerful historical traditions found in Indo-European thought, the philosopher Kant, and Allport's interpretative description of Othello" (Mathewson, 1994 p.1133-1134).

In Mathewson's application of the model to the process of reading the three components of attitude were interpreted as follows:

- Affect: "The prevailing feelings about reading"
- Cognition: "Evaluative beliefs about reading"
- Behaviour: "Action readiness for reading"

The same components had been adopted by Teale and Lewis (Teale & Lewis, 1981 p.99) whose model identified the beliefs governing the affective component of attitude. These beliefs were identified as follows:

i. Reading is important for getting good grades at school
ii. Reading helps a person get a job that pays more
iii. Reading helps one get along more efficiently in this society
iv. Reading helps a person gain insight into him/herself
v. Reading is a good way to find out about life
vi. Reading helps one understand other people better

Mathewson's final version offered a framework in which the most significant variables moderating the attitude-reading behaviour relationship could operate. This was again built on the theoretical models of others, in particular the Fishbein-Ajzen

model wherein *behaviour* is mediated by *intention* (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975). *Intention* is seen as a "complex involving an internalised purpose, a plan, and a time for beginning and continuing reading". *Intention* can be acted upon by a variety of influences arising from external motivators and internal emotional state. In his third model (figure 4.1) Mathewson introduced the notion that behaviour (ie. reading) is mediated by the intention to read. "The new model must be able to show that favourable attitude toward reading influences intention to read, that intention to read influences reading and that the results of reading are ideas and feelings" (Mathewson, 1994 p.1144).

According to this model, attitude is affected directly by *persuasive communication* and *cornerstone concepts* which include "values, goals and self-concepts" (Mathewson, 1994 p.1147). There is a bi-directional relationship between both reading and intention to read and attitude to reading: "The rationale for omitting a direct route from attitude to reading is that a positive attitude only results in reading if other influences are present" (Mathewson, 1994 p.1135).

Although the Mathewson model was not adopted in its entirety in the present study, several of its features have informed the design:

- The model assigned a central role to attitude in the reading process
- It took account of external motivators: incentives, purposes, norms and settings
- It included both beliefs and feelings within its definition of the attitude construct

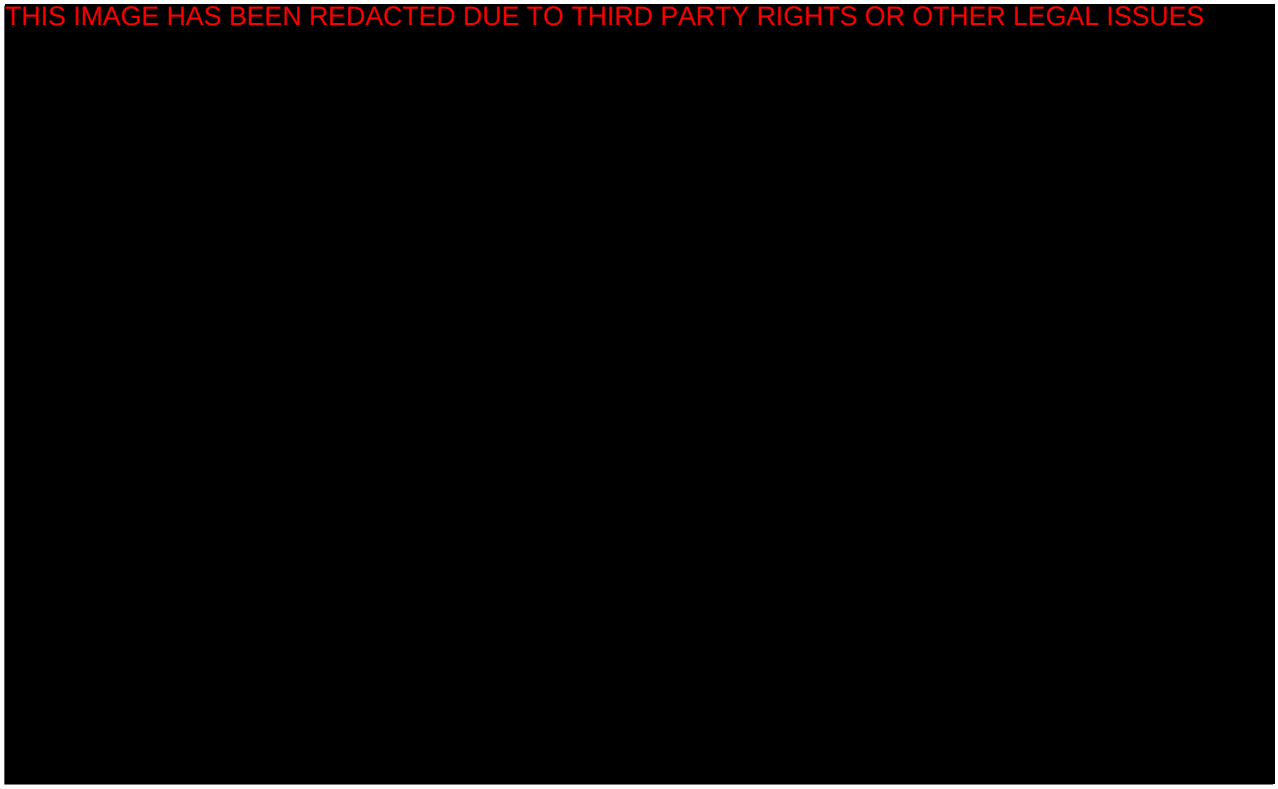


Figure 4.1 The Matthewson model of attitude influence upon reading and learning to read (Ruddell et al., 1994 p.1149)

4.4.3. The McKenna Model

Following Mathewson, Mc Kenna's theoretical structure (figure 4.2) was based on Liska's model of the attitude-behaviour relationship (Liska, 1984), itself a revision of the original Fishbein-Ajzen model. McKenna developed and refined Mathewson's model (McKenna, 1994) offering more practical terms of reference The theoretical constructs, (subjective norms, intention to read and attitude toward reading) were influenced by or 'contingent on' defined material factors, as described in figure 4.2. These factors were widely explored in the present study, through a qualitative analysis of boys' attitudes toward reading. Also of relevance to the present project, was the introduction of "social structure and environment" as a key influence on beliefs and hence indirectly on attitude. This relationship was integrated into the present study (see table 3.2.) through an adaptation of Bronfenbrenner's model of ecologies, identifying the environment which might influence the reader and reading outcomes (Bronfenbrenner, 1979).

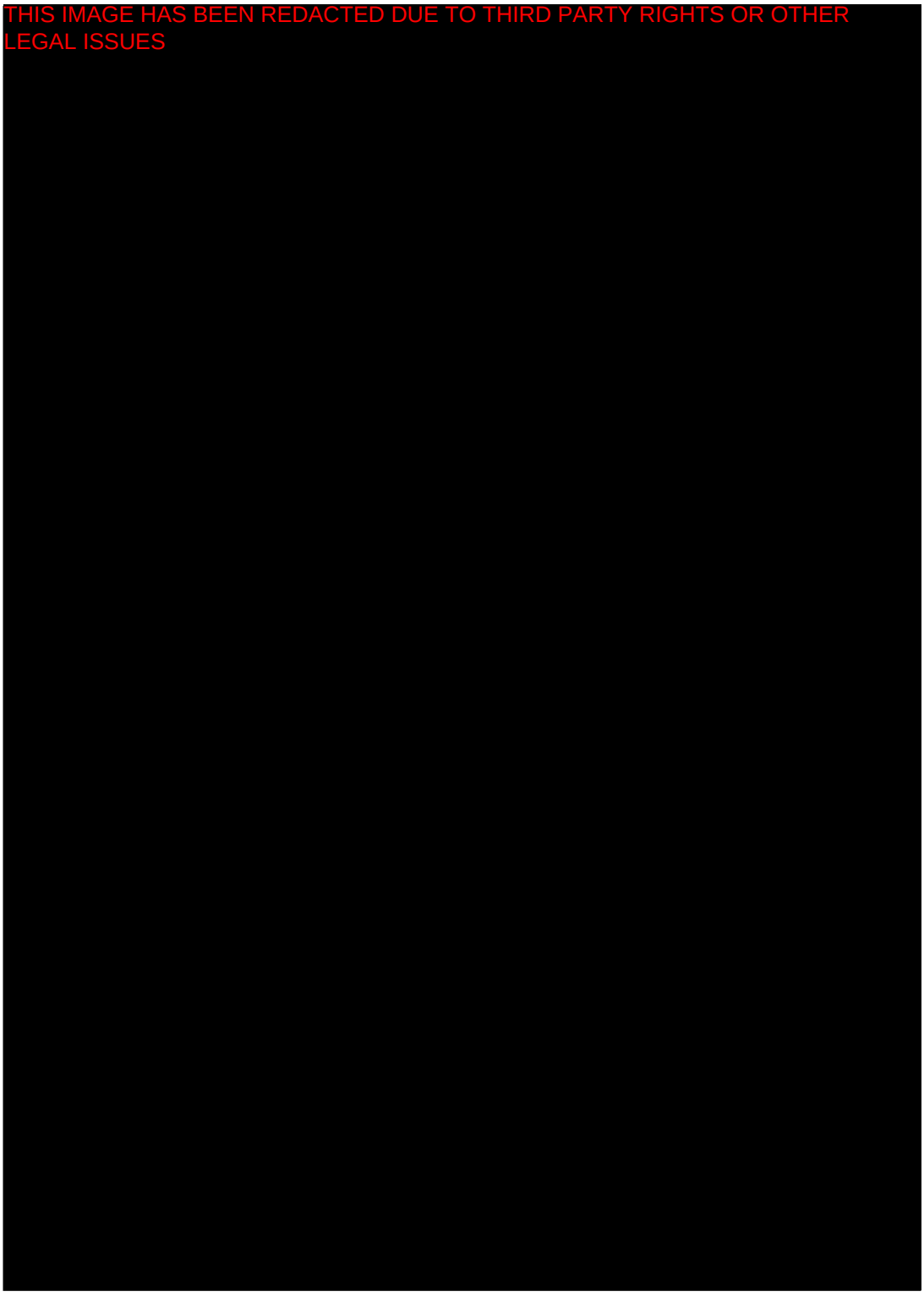


Figure 4.2 The McKenna Model of Reading Acquisition (Cramer & Castle, 1994 p.31)

4.4.4. The application of theoretical models of reading attitude acquisition

These theoretical models have developed alongside large and small-scale studies exploring the relationship of attitude to reading and reading achievement. The assumed association between positive attitudes and the reading habit, has served as a common rationale for the study of reading attitude.

In a study which included 5000 students in Victoria, Australia, Rowe presented an explanatory model of reading achievement which included attitudes to reading among five factors at the student level, which had an impact on achievement. "There is a strong interdependence between students' Attitudes Towards Reading and Reading Activity at Home, both of which have significant positive influences on achievement" (Rowe, 1995 p.82). Mc Kenna suggested that reading habits mediate between attitude and achievement: "Attitude may affect the level of ability of a given student through its influence on such factors as engagement and practice" (McKenna, 1995).

The amount that students read and the breadth of their reading have been shown to contribute to reading achievement, world knowledge and participation in society (Wigfield & Guthrie, 1997). Exposure to print has been related to measures of reading, comprehension and vocabulary. One hundred and fifty five fifth graders participated in a study, which investigated the relationship between amount of reading and reading achievement. Children were asked to complete an activity questionnaire on a daily basis. Three reading tests were administered prior to the commencement of the activity records in the middle of the year. Results suggested that "Reading books was the out-of-school activity that proved to have the strongest association with reading proficiency" (Anderson et al., 1988 p.297). Reading proficiency measures included comprehension, vocabulary and reading speed.

Cipiliewski and Stanovich (Cipielewski & Stanovich, 1992) developed 'print exposure' measures and found they correlated significantly with reading comprehension scores. They utilised a proxy measure of time spent reading in the

form of a title recognition list. This replaced the more commonly used methodology of using a daily activity record as a measure of reading activity. This record was felt to be an unsatisfactory measure in that it required sustained co-operation from teachers and pupils, demanded accurate recall, a problem among even highly motivated students, and was subject to the potential intrusion of bias arising from socially desirable answers. The title recognition list consisted of 38 items: 25 were children's book titles while 13 were foils. A children's author recognition test was also developed (ART) and used the same procedures as the title recognition test, (TRT). The sample in this study consisted of 98 children across two grades in a single school. A number of standardised reading tests were given together with the TRT and the ART. Both print exposure measures, the TRT and the ART, correlated significantly with reading comprehension scores. These findings have important implications for reading in the affective domain. "Because of research in the affective domain, we now know with greater certainty that children who have made positive associations with reading tend to read more often, for longer periods of time and with greater intensity. This greater engagement translates into superior reading achievement" (Henk & Melnik, 1995).

Millard's study of boys attributed boys' lower achievement in the language curriculum to the fact "that boys are not sufficiently engaged in the reading process" (Millard, 1997 p.167). This lack of engagement leads to a lack of experience, which has repercussions on a wide area of the curriculum. Millard's recommendations focus on the attitudinal perspective of reading, be it through the teacher, the nature of book provision or reading in the home.

Stanovich identified a whole range of correlated events, which contribute to the substantial difference in the amount of reading experience gained by children. "Children who become better readers have selected ...shaped ...and evoked ....an environment that will be conducive to further growth in reading" (Stanovich, 1986 p.382). These intensify individual differences setting in motion the "Matthew effects" discussed in this paper, a cycle of success for the good reader and conversely, of increasing failure for the poor reader. In this context, the early learning environment

plays a critical role in later reading success or failure. Premature placement of children in formal learning environments may inadvertently set in motion the cycle of "Matthew effects". "A child who is -for whatever reason - poorly equipped to acquire reading skill may evoke an instructional environment that will further inhibit learning to read" (Stanovich, 1986 p.396).

The dynamics of the interaction between the reading environment and the reader is critical, fostering success via success and failure via failure. Attitudinal perspectives of reading play a central role in creating a positive cycle although their effects may not appear immediately, thereby clouding their significance. Chapman and Tunmer carried out a two year longitudinal study, which hypothesised that the relationship between reading self-concept and reading skills would not show a relationship in the first 18 months of schooling, but that this would emerge strongly during the second and third year (Chapman & Tunmer, 1997). These hypotheses were corroborated by the findings. The study involved 152 children aged five at the commencement. Of these, 122 children remained at the end of the study. Reading self-concept was assessed by means of a scale developed by Chapman and Tumner, details of which are presented below. The RSCS, Reading Self-Concept Scale, was employed at Time 1, (the beginning of the children's first year at school) Time 2 (18 months later) and Time 3 (12 months later when the children were in their third year at school). Reading ability was assessed with a number of pre-reading, phonological tests at Time 1 and three reading performance tests at Time 2 and Time 3. Correlations between scores of reading performance and reading self-concept increased steadily over the three years, ($r = 0.11, 0.21, 0.35$), reaching a significant level at Time 2.

4.5. Summary

Changing conceptions of literacy have allowed attitude to become an integral element of its definition promoting its status for teachers and researchers. In spite of the relative paucity of research into the attitudinal dimension of reading, attitude has been identified as a powerful construct influencing reading habits and achievement. The

various associations described in these studies have provided some foundation for the proposed contribution of attitudinal and motivational factors toward reading habits and reading achievement. These associations have highlighted the significance of the attitudinal construct and have propelled the investigation into the measurement of attitude.

McKenna and Mathewson formulated theoretical models, which sought to explain these relationships and a growing body of empirical research has contributed to our understanding of them.

Following these models, this study has assigned a central and integral role to the attitudinal construct within the early stages of reading development. Adopting both qualitative and quantitative methodologies the study explored the cognitive and affective dimensions of reading attitude in the early years and examined its place in the process of reading development in the context of the children's particular school environments.

CHAPTER 5

THE MEASUREMENT OF ATTITUDE TOWARD READING

5.1. Introduction

The relative paucity of research into attitudinal dimensions of reading can be attributed in part to the difficulties of accurate measurement. The research literature presented in the following section describes the development of a number of instruments for the measurement of reading attitude and highlights the problems associated with such measurement among young children. As a result: "The voices of the most significant stake-holders, the children, are rarely heard" (Anning, 1998 p.301). This study addressed this issue, placing the attitudinal dimension of reading at the heart of the research and developing appropriate methodologies to reflect this priority.

The pilot study (appendix 1) addressed itself primarily to the task of developing tools, which would provide valid and reliable measurements and enhance our understanding of reading attitude among children during Key Stage One

5.2. First attempts at measurement

The earliest attempts to quantify children's attitudes to reading inferred attitude from behaviour. Askov's Primary Pupil Reading Attitude Inventory (Askov, 1969) asked children to select from a two choice format, between reading and other recreational activities. The sum of scores represented a point in a positive to negative range of like to dislike, defining *attitude* through its direct link with behaviour so that a child who chose to read was assumed to have a positive attitude to reading. The construct was simple, conveying just one dimension of attitude, and restricted in its application to recreational reading.

The inventory was validated by teachers' ratings of pupils' attitude, a method which according to Oppenheim (Oppenheim, 1992 p.161) tends to be unreliable. Askov used his inventory to explore the relationship between attitude and achievement, sex and grade placement. His findings suggested that girls held significantly more positive attitudes toward reading than did boys. The research did not establish any significant relationship between reading attitude and grade level. Nevertheless, the publication represented an early acknowledgement that attitude might serve as a useful construct in throwing light both on achievement outcomes and gender differences (Askov & Fischbach, 1973).

Askov's work was a response to the need for better instrumentation in this area. Inspite of the frequent lay use of the term, in a "common sense way", (Epstein, 1980) evidence pointed to confusion in the assessment of attitude, and lack of agreement among parents, teachers and children alike. The layman deduces attitude primarily from observation. He may observe certain patterns of behaviour or infer beliefs through speech, listening to expression of ideas through language. Unlike the researcher he takes definition for granted and does not seek to quantify his observation nor discriminate between sources of evidence. It became apparent that, among teachers, ability and attitude were frequently confused.

Molly Ransbury was reflecting on her own first year of teaching when she wrote of herself: "One of her most cherished ideals was to cultivate in these urchins a joy in reading. She had always loved to read, and wished to share this enjoyment with others." (Ransbury, 1973 p.25). Her perceived failure to do so led her to reflect on the role and perceptions of attitude toward reading. Based on the response of 60 children, their teachers and their parents, she established that each group adopted a distinctive approach in assessing this. Teachers showed a strong tendency to attribute positive reading attitudes to those children whose behaviours they categorised as 'teacher pleasing'. This made her reject the assumption that good readers were necessarily avid readers or vice versa . Her work focused on the affective element of attitude and like Askov & Fischbach (1973) stressed the importance of separating the concepts of attitude, achievement and ability.

The affective component bound up with behaviour, tended to dominate the earliest exploration of the attitude construct as it related to reading. Alexander and Filler's major review in this area was typical. "In this monograph attitude will be considered to consist of a system of feelings related to reading which causes the learner to approach or avoid a reading situation" (Alexander & Filler, 1976). This definition guided most of the earliest attempts made to develop instruments for the measurement of reading attitude.

These attempts at measurement often emerged from a practitioner's view of the concept, designed with practical classroom objectives in mind. The evaluation of attitude was not theoretically founded and although its role in learning was felt to be important, it had not yet been allocated a clear theoretical place in the reading process.

The Bullen Attitude to Reading Scale (Bullen, 1970) was among these early attempts The scale was developed in the context of the classroom but with the realisation that attitude was likely to be subject to home influence first and foremost. Bullen was concerned with a population of children from essentially 'non-reading' backgrounds. Forty eight percent of the children had no children's books in their home at all. The attitude to reading scale was developed in the context of a project which focused on enjoyment more than achievement. *Affect* dominated the attitude construct but the beginnings of new dimensions were evident. Bullen measured children's attitude to reading through their response to five separate contexts: reading in the home, visiting the library, reading in school, receiving books as presents and buying books. In time these and others were recognised as useful contexts for understanding the multi-faceted nature of the attitude construct, in particular the functional dimensions of reading attitude which came to be incorporated in many later attempts at measurement. The scale also reinforced the acknowledgement that behaviour and attitude do not have a straightforward uni-directional relationship. Quoting Festinger, Bullen finds support for this model: " We should not expect an attitude to be manifested by a corresponding behaviour, unless the respondent is given the necessary pre-requisites of other attitudes, character traits, other alternatives, and an environment that favours rather than conflicts with the expressed attitude" (Bullen,

1972 p.14). Context is seen to play an important role both for inferring and informing attitude, a feature absent in the measurement technique adopted earlier by Askov (Askov, 1972) and at much the same time, in the widely quoted Estes Reading Attitude Scale.

The Estes scale, published in 1971, (Estes 1971) collected its items from practising teachers.[1] These statements were administered to 283 pupils in grades 3-12. Split-half reliability of 0.94 suggested a good internal consistency and although there was a tendency for the mean scores to lie at the positive end of the scale, there was a broad spectrum of results which were interpreted to represent a wide variety of attitudes. Validation studies of the scale, reported in the literature review conducted by Ewing and Johnstone, have given it reserved backing (Ewing & Johnstone, 1981 p.5-6).

Out of the 20 statements which make up the attitude scale, the majority lie along a uni-dimensional positive to negative affect continuum represented by statements such as item (7), 'Reading turns me on' or item (20), ' Reading is dull'. Like other attitude scales of this period, the construct had not yet developed the multi-dimensional and more informative structure it was to gain by the late 1970s and early 1980s.

Nevertheless, the items have begun to reflect the tri-component interpretation of attitude which was to become integral to explicit attitude theory and to appear in almost every attempt to define the construct and its position in the reading process. The 'cognitive'element is apparent in item (1) 'Reading is for learning not for enjoyment' while the 'conative' element, behavioural intention, is implied in statement (15) 'There are many books which I hope to read.'

[1] Estes drew his items from the statements of 28 high school and elementary teachers, but there is no information as to what items were discarded as being no reflection of attitude

In 1975, Redelheim, (Redelheim, 1975) like Bullen, referred to the lack of suitable instruments to measure young children's attitudes to reading. [2] Once again his work was driven by the desire to explore the attitude-achievement relationship and had, in his view, important implications for class teaching strategies. Redelheim was concerned by the lack of validation of any one particular instrument for the Kindergarten to Second Grade age group.

Redelheim's instrument consisted of 36 photographs representing various reading situations. An original 55 photographs had been shown to 111 children from Kindergarten, Grade 1 and Grade 2. These children had given their judgement as to whether the photographs represented the reading situations as claimed, thus establishing content validity. "The nature of the group being evaluated, (young children), coupled with the fact that so little has been done to validate the use of any one particular scale construction approach with this age group, has led the author to believe that the children themselves should be the ones to judge the appropriateness of the photographs to be placed in the model" (Redelheim, 1975). Thirty seven photographs were selected; utilising a projective technique, the responses to the photographs were calculated as a measure of reading attitude.

Four types of reading context emerged from this sorting: instructional reading, school recreational, home recreational, outdoor recreational. These reading contexts emerged as distinctive dimensions of reading attitude in the form of instructional and recreational reading, dimensions which were adopted in the more recent scale developed to measure reading attitude (McKenna & Kear, 1990) and which reflected also a new interest in the functional dimension of reading attitude.

Redelheim's instrument was not known to Zirkel and Greene who expressed serious misgivings about the use of projective techniques. " The complexity of the scoring system makes this technique generally impracticable" (Zirkel & Greene, 1976 p.106).

[2] A number of such instruments are referred to in Epstein's review. None meet all three criteria of appropriate format, validity and reliability completely convincingly.

Whilst acknowledging the problem of such techniques, the advantages of using photographic items validated by the children themselves would have made this a valuable measurement tool. The immediacy of photographic stimuli, in particular for young children, has advantages over the use of verbal statements, which some children may find more difficult to process. It also moves away from the appearance of a more traditional test and would perhaps be more appealing for a child to complete. Unfortunately the outdated nature of the photographs leaves the instrument unsuitable for present day use but the methodology influenced the development of the PRAI (Photographic Reading Attitude Instrument) piloted (appendix 1) and later adopted in this study.

5.3. A multi-dimensional approach to reading attitude

Empirical studies related to the study of reading attitude resulted in a number of measurement instruments for use in a classroom context. At the same time research in this area began to scrutinise and develop the reading attitude construct itself.

" A recent study by Engin, Wallbrown and Brown, indicated that for intermediate grade children, reading attitude is a multi-factored phenomenon" (Wallbrown et al., 1978 p.106). The study from which this quotation is derived was a follow up to the authors' Survey of Reading Attitudes which had investigated dimensions of reading attitude through a factor analysis of responses on an 88 item scale. These responses took the form of a five-point Likert type scale and had led to the definition of seven dimensions of reading attitude and a separate reading achievement factor based on comprehension and vocabulary measures. The objective of the follow-up study was to establish construct validity for a revised version of the 88 items which eliminated less effective items and added some items to better reflect the dimensions suggested by the original factor analysis. The sample included 600 intermediate grade pupils, 100 boys and 100 girls from each grade. The results presented in the 1978 publication cross-validated the original seven dimensions and added a new dimension termed 'reading anxiety'. A separate reading achievement factor was again defined by comprehension and vocabulary.

The nature of these dimensions reflected the increasing complexity attached to measurement procedures. The details of how items loaded on these factors and the rationale for their definition are to be found in the study cited (Wallbrown et al., 1978). In general, the loadings suggested distinctive dimensions although there was some overlap of loadings on different factors. The fact that in due course many of these factors/dimensions became the subject of independent research substantiates the claim made for their distinctive identities. The interpretation of these factors is presented below.

1. ERD

Expressed Reading Difficulty

" The extent to which the student perceives of himself as having difficulty with reading and is willing to acknowledge the existence of a problem" (Wallbrown et al., 1978 p.162 quoting 1976 study).

2. RDR

Reading as Direct Reinforcement

"The RDR factor appears to measure the extent to which students perceive themselves as receiving direct reinforcement from their friends, classmates, parents and teacher for reading type activity."

3. RE

Reading as Enjoyment

"... students seek out reading-type activities and pursue reading in their spare time because it is enjoyable for them."

4. ALM

Alternative Learning Modes

"It reflects the extent to which students prefer to use alternatives other than reading when they are faced with a learning task." This includes being told or shown what to do, class discussions and talking about what to do.

5. RG

Reading Group

".... a common element which involves students' feelings about their reading group and/or their reaction to the instructional material used in the group."

6. RA

Reading Anxiety

"The eight items loading (0.35-0.58) on the 6th factor all were written to provide a measure to which reading-type activities elicit an emotional reaction from students." The common element of the items reflect the extent to which the student becomes emotionally upset and/or experiences unpleasant physical sensations or feelings when engaging in reading-type activities or thinking about them.

7. SvO

Silent Versus Oral Reading

".... assessing the relative preference of the student for silent reading activities as opposed to activities which require oral reading."

8. C

Comics

"... a high score indicates that a student enjoys reading comics and a low score indicates a lack of interest in this kind of reading material."

The significance of this work is twofold. First it presents a significantly more complex attitude construct than previously put forward. Secondly it begins to suggest the factors which are potentially working on and influencing attitude whether in terms of reading materials, reading context or expectations. These are later to be integrated in the attitudinal reading process models theorised by Mathewson (1994) and McKenna (1994).

The 1970s saw no lack of attempts at confronting the rather elusive attitude concept. However, two major reviews of research in this area still confirmed the scarcity of appropriate material produced. The monographs of Alexander and Filler (1976) and Epstein (1980) surveyed the various techniques employed in measurement and analysed the instruments' respective claims for validity and reliability. Some but not all of the instruments have been described in the present review.

A major new stage in the development of reading attitude instruments was entered with its architects well aware of the surprise that further efforts in the field might engender. " The present article details the development of an additional measure of reading attitude... and in view of the numerous scales now available, it would come as no great surprise were people to ask, 'Why another one?' " (Lewis & Teale, 1980). Lewis and Teale argued that they were offering a new perspective from two angles. First, the instrument had theoretical backing in its conceptualisation, lacking in previous works, which were deeply rooted in classroom practice. Secondly, it was to provide more comprehensive information about students' reading attitudes and as such improve its diagnostic utility. Although based on secondary school pupils the theoretical foundation of the instrument can be applied irrespective of the age of the sample.

5.3.1. Functional dimensions of reading attitude

The model adopted by Lewis and Teale was based on the tripartite conception of attitude, intertwined with the 'functional' theory of attitude. This theory, first formulated by Rosenberg [3] (Fishbein, 1967 p.31), suggested that function was the key to understanding attitude: the more 'instrumental' an *object* in achieving *goals* or *consequences of goals* that are highly valued, and conversely barring negative goals and their consequences, the more favourable the resultant attitude. This came to be known as the expectancy-value model.

In developing the theory, Rosenberg added an important link between the affective and cognitive strands of attitude. He claimed that, " Human beings have a need to achieve and maintain affective and cognitive consistency " (Fishbein, 1967 p.33). This suggested that belief and feeling within attitude must be congruent. The debate continues as to whether belief is an integrated component of attitude or an external factor influencing attitude (McKenna, 1994). Its centrality in the reading process, however, goes unchallenged.

[3] Rosenberg,M.J., Cognitive Structure and Attitudinal Affect Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology, 1956, 53, p. 367-372.

The conceptualisation of attitude toward reading adopted by Teale and Lewis (1981) incorporated functional dimensions. Their work sought to validate the existence of three separate and distinguishable, theoretically derived constructs encompassed by reading attitude. These they defined as follows:

- Individual Development factor — The value placed on reading as a means of gaining insight into self others and/or life in general
- Utilitarian factor — The value placed on the role of reading for attaining educational or vocational success or for managing life
- Enjoyment factor — The pleasure derived from reading

These three factors found theoretical support in the tripartite conceptualisation of attitude. Teale and Lewis also argued for the practical implications of the three factors they had derived. These, they felt, might highlight potentially important differences in young people's attitude toward reading which may not emerge in a global attitude measure.

In this study 56 reading attitude statements were compiled from a survey of teachers, reading experts, secondary school students and earlier attitude measurement instruments. These items were selected and formulated to reflect the three constructs. Subsequently 61 'reading education experts' were asked to indicate which if any of these constructs were represented by each of the statements. Forty items were designated with 80% agreement as belonging to one of three constructs. Accordingly, " the three constructs were clearly capable of being conceptually differentiated by the experts". Factor analyses were subsequently carried out on two sets of data collected from Grade 8 and Grade 12 students in two consecutive years. Whilst emerging as distinct concepts the three factors had a sufficiently low correlation to warrant independent measurement. For Teale and Lewis they firmly established the necessity of a multi-dimensional approach to the study of reading attitude in order to gain a complete and useful assessment of reading attitude.

A very similar theoretical structure would seem to underlie the work of Ewing and Johnstone (Ewing & Johnstone, 1981) which to date is one of the major British contributions to reading attitude measurement. Here, the construct, although still fluid, was influenced by a component view of attitude with functional elements. "For the research reported here, attitudes are seen as widely defined to include the individual's feelings, beliefs and values as elicited in reaction to reading in general and to identifiable reading experiences. In this way attitude is seen as multi-dimensional and dynamic rather than unitary and static" (Ewing & Johnstone, 1981 p.7). Twenty reading situations formed the items whose functions were categorised as:

- Affective, (how much do I like this type of reading?)
- Utilitarian/instrumental, (how useful is it?)
- Evaluative, (how important is it?)

Split-half reliability tests were all at or above 0.74.

In spite of an expanding awareness of the attitude construct and its significance in the reading process, the study itself was confined to a classroom context and therefore limited in its application. Moreover, like so many other attempts at measurement the research excluded the age group under consideration in the present study.

The view that reading had to be accompanied by purpose and meaning was expounded and promoted through the theory of Emergent Literacy. This viewed children's literacy development as embedded in the context of the situation. "Readers in our society who do read, as opposed to the readers who can read, use reading for all its varied purposes" (Goodman & Goodman, 1979 p.152). Children's understanding of the functions of print was intrinsic to successful learning: "As long as children see print as purposeless or nonsensical, they will find attention to print aversive and be bored" (Smith, 1983 p.40).

In 1980 Neuman carried out an exploratory study into the functions of reading (Neuman, 1980). The work was set within a theoretical framework borrowed from the field of mass communications. The theory suggests that an individual chooses the particular communication options most likely to fulfil his/her needs, a framework

known as 'uses and gratifications'. Applied to the reading process, need fulfilment might determine the extent and way reading is used. Neuman's objective was to establish whether these "need fulfilment" functions were age-related and it served as a preliminary investigation to finding out what functions might emerge in a larger study.

The small-scale study was limited in age span, including children from and including grades three to nine. Three hundred and thirteen children from 12 schools made up the sample. A major methodological weakness lay in the fact that all answers were written by participants in essay form and therefore, as Neuman herself recognised, were subject to the respondents' ability to use "expressive language". The essays were content-analysed by two independent research assistants and yielded six clusters of 'reasons for reading'. These clusters were based on a 90% inter-coder agreement level and reflected much material incorporated in the Teale and Lewis model (Teale & Lewis, 1981).

The functions distinguished were as follows:

Relief from boredom
To learn
To escape
Stimulation
Convenience of consumption
Enjoyment

The analysis was carried out by determining the percentage of response on each of the functions according to grade level. Although the number of purposes for reading did not vary with grade level there were changes in the pattern of response. Both the enjoyment and the learning factors fell to their lowest in the top grade (Grade 9) while the same grade saw a sharp rise in "relief from boredom" and "escape" factors. There was a consistently low score on the "stimulation factor" except in Grade 7.

Similar objectives characterised a study carried out three years later by Greany and Neuman (1983). The comparison this time was limited to pupils in Grades 3, 5 and 8 but extended to include Irish and American children. The 'uses and gratifications' model was again adopted. A pilot study, carried out in Dublin, made a content analysis of essays similar to the ones described in the earlier study. On the basis of this analysis a series of statements was developed to illustrate the functions of reading. Modifications resulting from pre-testing the statements led to a 16 item Function of Reading Scale. This was administered to a sample of 459 pupils in class groups and was read aloud to pupils. Factor analyses were carried out separately on the American and Irish data and three distinctive factors were found in both countries. These were found to be very similar with a co-efficient of congruence for each factor respectively of 0.95, 0.93 and 0.91.

1. Enjoyment

" A student rated highly on this factor generally considers reading exciting and interesting. The factor describes the student's personal response" (Greany & Neuman, 1983 p.160).

2. Utilitarian

   The student regards reading as useful in school and for later careers.

3. Escapist

   Reading occurs most often when the individual is bored or worried and there is no immediate alternative.

The data was pooled and each factor analysed individually yielding the following results. Girls scored higher than boys on the 'enjoyment' factor but lower on the 'utilitarian' factor. Fifth graders read for enjoyment more than either third or eighth graders. Irish pupils tended to read more for both 'enjoyment' and 'utilitarian' purposes than their American counterparts but American pupils scored higher on the escapist factor.

The functions elicited were viewed as resting on psychological / personality factors and social factors which include home environment, peer group and leisure time activities. Need fulfilment was still seen as the basis on which the particular function

was selected. In conclusion the authors wrote: " It assumes that the child actively pursues certain materials on the basis of pre-determined needs... In addition we should note that a child's selectivity operates within an environmental framework" (Greany & Neuman, 1983).

The function of reading was still the subject of research in 1990 when the same two authors conducted a much larger international study (Greany & Neuman, 1990). Although the number of functions identified increased with age, reaching a total of ten functions distinguished within the eight to thirteen year age-range, the most frequently cited were again, enjoyment, utility (learning to learn) and escapism.

The major Australian Children's Choice Project led by Bunbury (Bunbury, 1995) endorsed the analysis of attitude through function. The particular categorisation of function proposed by Teale and Lewis, provided the "basis of the scale used in the Children's Project" (Bunbury, 1995 p.104) appearing in a very similar format.

Of an initial seven item-defined scale dimensions, four were extracted as independently useful in the measurement of attitude subsequent to inter-correlation measurement.

1. enjoyment
2. utilitarian-school
3. utilitarian-work
4. insight (included insight to self/others/ life)

The defining type of statement of each function is illustrated by a positive and negative example (Bunbury, 1995 p.110). Seven items described each dimension in the version employed in the Children's Choice questionnaire. Detailed discussion of the four dimensions and their relevance to different age groups can be found in Chapter 5 of the Bunbury study. Clearly there is still room for debate on the exact definition of functions. However, the key role that must be assigned to functions in understanding a child's attitude to reading, is firmly upheld in the theoretical

framework underpinning this work and the considerable research on which it is founded.

While the study presented a methodologically sound technique for the measurement of reading attitude, its authors remained committed to a multi-measure approach. A comprehensive understanding of attitude is only attained by adopting a variety of techniques to adequately explore its horizons and implications. The scale incorporated in the reading attitude questionnaire, established only one source of information for the teacher who should continue to use all techniques and approaches available "when endeavouring to gauge young peoples' attitude to reading" (Bunbury, 1995 p.103).

5.3.2. Motivational dimensions of reading attitude

A complementary approach to defining the functional strands of attitude, has been offered through the field of motivational research and based on motivation theory. This theoretical framework has much in common with the functional analysis of the reading attitude construct described in the previous section. It too is multi-dimensional but differs in its tendency to have a more intrinsic focus. Wigfield identified three motivational constructs: self-efficacy beliefs, intrinsic/extrinsic motivation and social aspects of motivation (Wigfield, 1997) and adopted these to analyse the relationship between children's motivation for reading and the amount and breadth of their reading (Wigfield & Guthrie, 1997).

The sample of 105 Grade 4 and Grade 5 children was selected from a single school but were mixed in terms of SES and ethnicity. All the children completed the Motivation for Reading Questionnaire, MRQ which, after pilot testing, consisted of 82 items reflecting the three selected aspects of motivation. The Reading Activity Inventory (RAI) was administered straight after the MRQ. This gave a reliable measure of the amount and breadth of children's reading (autumn and spring administration of the measure correlated 0.54 $p<.001$). A further measure of amount of reading out of school was derived from logs kept by children and monitored by

parents as part of a special reading programme in the which the school was involved. These measures were collected in the autumn and then again in the spring. Results of this study suggested

- Perceived efficacy is one of the strongest predictors of achievement
- Children's reading motivation predicts amount and breadth of reading

The role of self concept/self efficacy has received particular attention. Studies in this area suggest that:

- Attainment of goals is significantly related to the development of a positive self-concept
- Intrinsic motivation is closely related to self-concept and school performance
- Low attitude and poor self-concept are positively correlated (Cothern, 1992)

Following the gradual recognition of the role played by self-concept, Henk and Melnick (1995) developed an instrument to measure how children feel about themselves as readers. The RSPS, Reader Self-Perception Scale, was based on Bandura's theory of perceived self-efficacy which suggests that self-perception can inhibit or promote learning. "Self-efficacy judgements, whether accurate or faulty, influence choice of activities and environmental settings" (Bandura, 1982 p.123). Bandura's theoretical work supported the theory that people avoid activities which they feel lie beyond their capabilities. Applied to reading this would mean that children who believe they are poor readers would generally avoid reading. Perception of the self contributes independently to the reading habit. The RSPS consists of 33 items, which assess the reader's self-perception along four dimensions. These dimensions were borrowed from Bandura's theory of self-perception. "Efficacy expectations vary on several dimensions that have important performance implications" (Bandura, 1977 p.194). An original item pool was analyzed by 30 graduate students who categorized the items in four proposed dimensions: Performance, Observational Comparison, Social Feedback and Physiological State. After an initial administration to 625 pupils Grades 4, 5 and 6, the Performance category was replaced by the term Progress which was felt to better reflect the reader's perception of his/her own ability. The scale was then piloted a second time

on 1479 pupils Grades 4, 5 and 6. Alpha reliabilities ranged from 0.81 to 0.84. A factor analysis indicated the existence of four dimensions as expected. The RSPS correlated moderately but significantly with McKenna's Elementary Reading Attitude Scale.

5.4. Measurement of reading attitude in young children

The many strands of research around the construct of reading attitude have been defined and illuminated predominantly with empirical evidence drawn from children who have been in school for a number of years. Not surprisingly the majority of instruments for the measurement of attitude are not applicable to the early years. There are a number of reasons for this. Young children's attitudes are thought to be unstable and their belief systems as yet unclear: "...research suggests that children in earlier grades tend not to appraise their reading ability accurately" (Henk & Melnik, 1995 p.476). Moreover, in an international context children tend not to commence learning how to read much before their sixth birthday. Since interest in children's attitude to reading is generally associated with the commencement of formal school and the accompanying process of learning to read, the need for instruments to measure attitude toward reading in such young children has generally not existed. Nevertheless the growing prominence of literacy in the pre-school years in the USA, has lead to some interest in the origins of children's motivational development in this area. A recent investigation has sought to monitor the origins of literacy motivations within the context of the kindergarten classroom (Nolen, 2001). This ethnographic study highlighted how these kindergarten classrooms created different definitions of "successful reading and writing" which had important implications for these young pupils.

Three reading attitude instruments form an exception to the general dearth of instrumentation in this area.

1) PRAS, Preschool Reading Attitude Scale (Saracho, 1988)
2) ERAS Elementary Reading Attitude Scale (McKenna & Kear, 1990)
3) RSCS Reading Self-Concept Scale (Chapman & Tunmer, 1997).

All three scales were employed in the present study and are described in some detail in chapter six.

5.5. Summary

The review of research in the field of attitude and motivation for reading has provided significant evidence for the important contributions offered by the attitudinal dimension of reading. A number of instruments have been described which have attempted to measure this elusive but significant construct. The instruments have reflected the changing theoretical perspectives of the attitude construct from the simple uni-directional definition which guided research in the 1970s, to the increasingly complex, multi-dimensional definitions, incorporating cognitive, affective and behavioural dimensions, reflected in Mathewson's and McKenna's major theoretical models of reading acquisition.

Only a small proportion of the work reviewed was conducted in Great Britain. Instruments for the measurement of reading attitude were rarely developed for use with children younger than six years of age and never for a population of such young children in the process of learning to read. The gap in suitable instrumentation identified through reviewing the literature was addressed in the pilot study. This study, presented in Appendix 1, set out to develop an instrument suitable to measure attitudes toward reading among British children in the period of transition between home and school and through the years of Key Stage One. The instrument, the Photographic Reading Attitude Instrument (PRAI), was developed over the course of a year and adopted in the main study.

CHAPTER 6

DESIGN OF MAIN STUDY

6.1. Background

The lack of consistency among LEAs in terms of their admission policies results in very varied and arbitrary experiences for four-year-olds. Depending on their geographical location children may not begin school until they are five years and four months or alternatively they may be in school by the month following their fourth birthday. While for some the initial experience at four or four and a half is part-time, for others, there is no alternative on offer but full-time education.

The main study collected data from a sample of 60 boys allocated evenly to one of two groups, according to the age at which the children first entered school. The first, referred to throughout the study as the Reception class group, consisted of those boys who experienced a minimum of one but more often two or three terms of Reception class. The second group, referred to as the Nursery class group, was made up of boys who entered school after their fifth birthday and had no experience of the Reception class. These boys first entered formal full-time school in Year One.

6.2. Time structure

The study had a longitudinal design over a two-year period during which data was collected from children on an annual basis as follows:

Time 1: just before the children entered Year One. (In a few cases time factors did not allow the completion of all data collection prior to entry. In these cases data was collected immediately after entry into Year One)

Time 2: in the final term of Year 1

Time 3: in the final term of Year 2

Parents were interviewed at Time 1 and information was also collected with a questionnaire at the same time. Questionnaires were also sent out to parents at Time 2 and Time 3.

For practical reasons, the sample was divided into two cohorts. The first cohort entered Year One in September 1998; the second cohort entered Year One in September 1999.

6.3. The sample

The sample consisted of 60 summer-born boys. In view of time constraints and the broad geographical distribution of the sample, this was felt to be the maximum number for which data collection would be feasible. Consultation with statistical experts suggested that this number would be large enough to yield statistical significance, while allowing for the loss of a few boys from the study over the two-year period.

The sampling frame was designed to reflect a homogeneous sub-section of the population. This homogeneity was defined by date of birth, gender and home language. This option was pursued in the knowledge that the generalisability of the study would be limited, but that the findings would yield a clearer picture of the outcome variable, reading attitude, and offer more potential for statistical analysis. The segment of the school population identified demonstrates some interesting characteristics. As illustrated in earlier chapters, both gender and date of birth have been shown to be significant factors in school achievement. The sub-group targeted in this study, summer-born boys, were likely to be particularly vulnerable to the effect of age of entry to school.

6.4. Sampling framework

The sample was randomly selected at three levels as illustrated in table 6.1.

Levels	Criteria for inclusion	Number
LEAS	admission policy, accessibility	6
SCHOOLS	admission policy	18
CHILDREN	month of birth, language spoken in the home, no identified special needs	60

Table 6.1 Levels for stratified sampling

6.4.1. Local Education Authorities

Relatively few LEAs operate a statutory age admission policy, with a trend toward lower admission continuing (Daniels et al., 1995). In order to minimise potential effects of individual LEA characteristics on the outcome variable the inclusion of more than one LEA in each group was felt to be important. Six LEAs were identified for inclusion:

1. Bedfordshire

Bedfordshire operated a mixed policy with some schools admitting children after their fifth birthday and some at 4+.

2. Oxfordshire

Oxfordshire operated an admission policy according to statutory age of entry. Children have reached their fifth birthday before entering school

3. Hillingdon

Hillingdon operates an admission policy according to statutory age of entry. Children have reached their fifth birthday before entering school

4. Harrow

Harrow admits children at 4+ during the school year in which the child reaches his/her fifth birthday.

5. Brent

Brent admits children at 4+ during the school year in which the child reaches his/her fifth birthday.

6. Hertfordshire

Hertfordshire admits children at 4+ in the term before children reach their fifth birthday.

Due to some unforeseen problems in the involvement of two families the final sample was not quite evenly distributed. The Reception class group, consisting of 28 boys, was drawn from LEAs which admit children prior to their fifth birthday. The Nursery class group, consisting of 32 boys, was selected from LEAs which implement an admission policy whereby children enter school after their fifth birthday, at the statutory age.

6.4.2. Schools

Letters were written to the head teachers of several schools in each LEA outlining the research project and seeking permission for the involvement of a few boys. Where schools agreed to participate, head teachers identified boys whose families might be approached. These boys had to meet the criteria outlined below. Boys were drawn from sixteen schools. Four boys moved home during the course of the study. Contact was maintained through their parents and arrangements were made to visit them at their new schools.

6.4.3. The boys

A number of criteria governing the selection of the sample were intended to ensure maximum homogeneity and so enable group comparison within a small sample. These criteria included gender, age and home language.

6.4.3.1. Gender

The sample selected included only boys. The decision to employ this restriction was influenced by a number of factors. The selection of a single sex sample has a significant predecessor in the very well-known study of Tizard and Hughes (1984) although in this case the sample consisted only of girls. Much research has indicated a marked difference between boys and girls in terms both of their attitude toward reading and their achievement. Guided by previous research this study assumed that the age of entry effect was likely to be more marked among boys, than among girls. Finally, the single gender study maximised the potential for statistical analysis of two groups in a small sample.

6.4.3.2. Age

All boys in the sample had birthdays which fell between May and August, so that they constituted the youngest group within the year. Research has shown birth-date effects with some long-term disadvantages for summer-born children. This suggests that the age of entry effect was likely to be more pronounced within this year sub-group. The inclusion of only summer-born boys also strengthened the homogeneity of the sample. The statistical advantages of this homogeneity have already been mentioned.

6.4.3.3. Language

All children in the sample used English as the main language of communication in the home. The sample excluded bi-lingual children. Since spoken language is intrinsically bound up with reading development it was felt that homogeneity must be maintained in this area.

6.4.3.4. Socio-economic status

Although poor performance in school is often attributed to variables associated with socio-economic status (SES), there is no evidence of a relationship SES and the formation of attitudes toward reading. SES was not used as a criterion of selection for this sample although some relevant information was collected via questionnaires.

6.4.3.5. Ability

Children with learning disabilities were not included in the sample. However, the sample was randomly selected to include a wide range of ability and development.

6.5. The method

Reading research within the early years has tended to focus on skills-related achievement scores as primary measures of assessment. This study differed from this trend, both in its emphasis on the emotional/attitudinal dimension of reading and its employment of qualitative techniques of data collection, which used both parents and children as sources.

Recognition of children's value as "partners" in research is not widespread and as Anning pointed out: "…. we are struggling to find methods of accessing their views and needs" (Anning, 1998 p.301). The pilot study developed a new instrument for the measurement of attitude toward reading among children aged approximately five to seven years. These attitudes were both measured quantitatively and explored qualitatively to develop a comprehensive understanding of their nature and of changes over time. A mixture of methodologies and the use of both parent and child sources, together created a rich bank of data, with which to address the research questions which formed the basis of this study.

6.5.1 Instruments of data collection

Table 6.2. summarises the instruments of data collection employed during the course of the study. The instruments are described below.

Reading test	Acronym	Reference	Age group
Pre-school Reading Attitude Test	PRAS	(Saracho, 1988)	Three to five years
Photographic Reading Attitude Instrument	PRAI	Unpublished (see pilot study)	Four to seven years
Reading Self-Concept Scale	RSCS	(Chapman & Tunmer, 1995)	Five to eight years
Elementary Reading Attitude Scale	ERAS	(McKenna & Kear, 1990)	Six to eleven years

Table 6.2 Instruments of data collection

Pre-school Reading Attitude Scale (Saracho, 1988)

PRAS

Saracho's scale, the Pre-school Reading Attitude Scale (PRAS), is unique in its investigation of attitudes among children as young as three. It is a 12- item scale derived from children's statements reflecting their perception of reading. The original 34 items were derived from interviews with 102 children. These were tested on a population of 180 children. Item analysis led to a refinement of the scale first to 25 items and later to just 12, in order to make it possible to use with children between the ages of 3 and 5. The 25 item version was standardised on 2232 children.

These statements were classified in four groups each representing an aspect of the child's environment. Dimensions of reading are governed by concrete contexts rather than the more theoretical constructs of McKenna and others. The statements do not tap functional dimensions of reading although children may have implicit functions associated with particular contexts.

The items all commence " How do you feel when...". and children respond on a three-point 'smiley faces' scale.

Saracho identified four dimensions related to context:

1. Reading books in general
2. Reading printed material in school (not related to learning to read)
3. Reading books in the library
4. Reading books in the classroom

Criterion-validity was assessed by comparing teachers' assessments of their pupils' attitude toward reading and found to be highly significant. Twelve teachers were asked to select two groups consisting of ten pupils each who demonstrated respectively the most and the least positive attitudes toward reading. This assessment was derived from children's observed reading habits. This included frequency of looking at books and listening to stories and identification of words and letters. Reliability for the scale was also high, r= 0.95 on test-re-test.

While easy to administer and supported by satisfactory measures of reliability, the scale has some shortcomings. There is some dispute about the validity of the methodology, which employs the assessment of attitude by others as the criterion of comparison. Moreover, its reliance on immediate environment as an indicator of attitude fails to include those children whose experience does not include those particular environments. Not all children may share books with their friends in the library for instance. Similarly, it fails to do justice to those whose experience may be broader. The language employed in the statements is sometimes unclear, as in the phrase "reading with everybody". The scale has further problems when transferred to a British population where children of four are no longer pre-school children. The school dimension of learning to reading as experienced by children in compulsory school before age five is missing. The restriction of the PRAS to pre-school was also seen as a disadvantage to its use in a study which follows children longitudinally from Nursery to school. The PRAS does not deal with this period of transition.

The lack of other equivalent scales for the assessment of reading attitudes among such young children led to the use of the PRAS in this study as a broad gauge of children's attitudes. It also provided further validation of the PRAI, an instrument for the assessment of reading attitude, developed for the purposes of this study. The total scores on these two instruments at Time 1 had a correlation which suggested both instruments were measuring a similar underlying attitudinal construct (rho= 0.47 $p<0.01$).

Photographic Reading Attitude Instrument

PRAI

The PRAI measures children's attitudes toward reading. The development of this instrument PRAI (Photographic Reading Attitude Instrument) is described in the pilot study (Appendix 1).

Qualitative exploration of boys' attitude toward reading

Problems associated with interviewing children have been documented elsewhere and were addressed in the pilot study through the development of appropriate methodology (see section A.1.2.3.). Selected photographs from the PRAI were used as stimuli for children to make up 'stories' suggested by the photographs. These stories were taped and transcribed for later analysis. The research objective was to explore children's attitudes, incorporating beliefs, about reading in a more qualitative way than was possible with either PRAS or PRAI. The photographs allowed children to express attitudes about different types of reading materials, different contexts for reading (reading with different people and in different places) and the functions of reading. In some cases, stories were developed by prompting with focused questions.

The British Picture Vocabulary Scale (Dunn, 1982) **BPVS**

The BPVS measures children's receptive vocabulary. The test is easy to administer to young children and was adopted in this study as a standardised measure of children's vocabulary acquisition and as such an indicator of literacy development.

Phonological Abilities Test (Muter et al., 1997) **PAT**

This test was developed for use with children between the ages of four and seven. The test is divided into six tasks, (subsets) and can be administered in a shortened form by the selection of recommended sub-sets. The four sub-sets suggested for use with five

year-olds, are recognised as good predictors of later reading skill (ibid. p.3). In order to minimise the time demand on children the subset rather than the whole test was administered to the boys. The subset recommended for use with five-year-olds consists of four tests:

Rhyme Detection

Phoneme Deletion; Beginning and End Sounds

Letter Knowledge

Parental Questionnaires

Parental questionnaires were distributed on three occasions. The first questionnaire was designed to gain some information about home background variables which related to children's home literacy environments. The questionnaire sought information on mother's educational qualifications, library membership of parent and child and the number of books in the home. These are all well recognised indicators of home literacy environments (Weinberger et al., 1990). The questionnaire is included in appendix 2, section A.

Questionnaires were sent out to all parents at the end of Year One and Year Two. These sought to explore parental perspectives about their children's early school experiences and reading development. These questionnaires can be found in appendix 2, section B and C.

Parental Interview

The mothers[4] of all children were interviewed in order to obtain both quantitative and qualitative data exploring home literacy and parental beliefs about literacy. The interviews were all transcribed for later analysis.

Qualitative data investigated:

a) Parental views about their children's attitudes toward reading
b) A description of the child's reading habits
c) Parental views about early years education, expectations of Nursery versus Reception class curricula/literacy outcomes
d) Parental views about their own role in developing their children's literacy

[4] In all except one case where father was interviewed as main-carer

Quantitative data measured:

a) Reading frequency compared to other leisure time activities
b) The importance attached to different leisure time activities by parents, measured on a scale of one to five where one signified 'not important at all' and five 'very important'.
c) A measure of 'storybook exposure' based on a recognition list of children's books. This methodology was first developed by Stanovich and his colleagues as a tool for measuring parents', and then children's exposure to print (Cipielewski & Stanovich, 1992; Cunningham, 1990; Stanovich & West, 1989; Stanovich, 1992) Criterion-validity was claimed on the basis that the lists were better predictors of children's language than self-report measures of reading. The 20 foils inserted in the list detected any attempts at guessing and the methodology avoided the bias of 'socially desirable answers'. Senechal et.al. adapted the tool in an attempt to assess "parents' relative exposure to children's literature" (Senechal et al., 1998). Parents' performance on these lists were interpreted as a reflection of their exposure to children's books and interpreted as a function of the parent reading to the child. The methodology was employed in this study but the list was adapted for use with British children by selecting from British best-sellers and informed by specialists in children's books (Appendix 2 section D). The original 20 foils were included in this list. A normal distribution of scores suggested that the replacement of certain titles did not engender any problems.
d) A measure of parental beliefs about appropriate ways to teach basic skills to young children. This measure (appendix 2, section D) consisted of 15 statements to which parents had to respond on a scale of one to five, where one indicated total disagreement and five indicated total agreement. Statement 15 was dropped after some 20 interviews as there was no variation in response. The measure was adapted from a study, which explored parents' pedagogical beliefs and the way they taught their own children (Stipek et al., 1992). Depending on the early years experience of the child, the terms Reception or Nursery replaced the word Kindergarten throughout.

Reading Self-Concept Scale RSCS (Chapman & Tunmer, 1993)

The RSCS consists of 30 items formulated as questions to which children respond on a 5 point scale:

- 'yes, always'
- 'Yes, usually'
- 'Undecided or unsure'
- 'No, not usually'
- 'No, never'

This version is a modified form of a 50-item scale developed by Chapman and Tunmer (Chapman & Tunmer, 1993).The items were originally derived from consultations with reading specialists and teachers of young primary school children. These items were extensively piloted with small samples of children. Detailed examination of this scale led to its revision and the present 30-item scale (Chapman & Tunmer, 1993) in which all items are phrased as questions. Reliabilities for this scale were consistent across Years One, Two and Three (Cronbach's Alpha 0.85/0.84). Factor analyses suggested that there were three subcomponents within reading self-concept. These were defined as perceptions of competence, perceptions of difficulty and attitude. While the number of subcomponents remain constant over time (Year One to Year Three) there are changes in the relationship between the factors. By Year Three a positive attitude becomes incompatible with perceptions of difficulty and children also begin to realise that perceptions of difficulty are incompatible with self-perceptions of competence.

This scale was used in a longitudinal study of children beginning school in New Zealand (Chapman & Tunmer, 1997). When first tested the children had a mean age of 5yr 11m. Its application to children commencing school made this a useful tool for the present study although reading self-concept was found to be an unstable construct in the first two years of school.

The Elementary Reading Attitude Scale ERAS

The development of ERAS, The Elementary Reading Attitude Scale, by McKenna and Kear, is described in detail by these authors (McKenna & Kear, 1990).The scale was designed for use with children in their first six years at school (Grades 1 to 6). It

consists of 20 items with a four point response scale represented in pictorial form (an adaptation of smiley faces). Each item is introduced by " How do you feel ....." and the response is interpreted as a measure of affect.

The scale is based on a view of attitude which identifies two main dimensions of reading attitude, recreational and academic. Support for the two sub-scales is derived from two factor analyses. An original 39 items derived from earlier surveys of reading attitude was administered to 499 elementary school children. The final 20 items were selected on the basis of inter-item correlation. The revised scale was administered to 18,000 children in Grades 1-6. Construct validity for the recreational dimension of the scale was tested using three correlates: library card holders versus children who were not library card holders, children who had a book out of the school library versus those who did not and children who watched less than one hour television per day. Significantly higher recreational scores were attained by children who were library card holders and by those who had a book out of the library.Validity for the academic dimension was based on reading ability as judged by teachers.

6.5.2. Administration of data collection

Contact was made with all the schools involved in the study at the beginning of each summer term. Arrangements were made to visit each child twice, for a period of 30 to 40 minutes per visit. During the course of three years there was inevitably some movement of children to different areas of the country. However, these families were successfully tracked to their new location and arrangements to visit the boys in their current schools were made accordingly.

The physical facilities in some schools offered less than ideal conditions for the collection of data from the children. Sometimes work had to be carried out in corridors and problems encountered included high noise levels and interruption by inquisitive classmates. Nevertheless, participating boys were extremely co-operative and data was collected successfully from the sample. Response to parental

questionnaires was slow and several follow-up attempts were made. Fifty-three questionnaires were returned at Time Two and 51 at Time Three.

6.6. Structure of analysis

Data collected over the three-year period fell into two main categories: child data and parental data. At each stage this data was analysed cross-sectionally across the whole sample and comparing results between the two groups of boys, and between their parents. These groups had been defined by their experiences of school or Nursery education prior to the age of compulsory schooling. The data was also analysed longitudinally so that changes over time were monitored and again group comparisons could be drawn. The data presented and analysed in the following chapters is presented chronologically, following the boys from the term prior to entry to Year One to the final term of Key Stage One (chapters 7 to 11). Parental data is presented subsequently in a parallel chronological form (chapters 12 to 14). Conclusions are drawn in chapter 15.

CHAPTER 7

PRIOR TO COMPULSORY SCHOOLING: THE MEASUREMENT OF READING ATTITUDE AND PRE-READING SKILLS IN A SAMPLE OF SUMMER-BORN RECEPTION AND NURSERY CLASS BOYS, AGED FIVE

7.1. Inter-relationship between school, home and early reading development

As illustrated by such studies as that of Weinberger (Weinberger, 1996), children come to school with a broad experience of literacy. How this literacy develops depends on the subsequent interrelationship of school, home and child. All three are fluid entities subject to constant change within themselves and between each other so that to isolate single factors of influence is an elusive task.

This project focused predominantly on school factors. In its design it tried to identify differences in boys' reading development dependent on the type of out-of-home educational environment encountered prior to the commencement of compulsory school. Twenty nine boys had experienced a minimum of one, but mainly two or three terms of full-time Reception class. Thirty one boys were still attending part-time Nursery , either a morning or afternoon session, lasting about two and a quarter hours.

The study hypothesised that full-time Reception class education was likely to produce children with a better knowledge of some basic skills, such as for instance letter recognition. At the same time it hypothesised that its more formal and higher demands for literacy achievements, might engender less positive attitudes towards reading.

The data presented in this chapter was collected in the term prior to entry into Year One. The study compared boys in both groups on a number of measures of early reading development as well as measures of their home literacy environments. These measures and their inter-relationships, as shown in figure 7.1, are first reported for the sample as a whole:

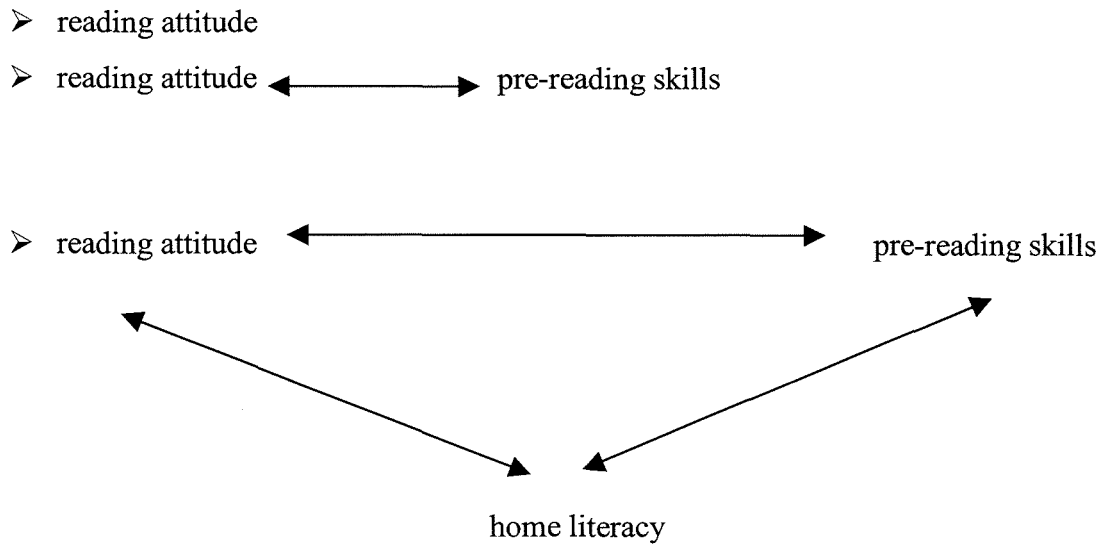


Figure 7.1. Diagrammatic portrayal of structure of data analysis

Comparisons are then drawn between the two groups of boys on all these measures and their inter-relationships. In Chapter 8, the attitudinal dimension of the boys' reading development is investigated more deeply. Chapter 12 broadens the analysis of the home-school relationship.

7.2. The measurement of attitude to reading

The rationale for assigning a prominent position to 'reading attitude' in the assessment of childrens' reading was presented in the literature review. In theory, at least, both teachers and parents are broadly committed to the development of positive attitudes to reading in the teaching process. However, in the classroom assessment of reading attitude has generally been left to instinct rather than standardised measurement. The success of teachers or parents in fostering positive attitudes to reading has therefore remained somewhat difficult to guage.

The problems associated with measuring children's attitude to reading have been discussed elsewhere and do not to be re-iterated. The present project adopted two measures for the assessment of reading attitude: the PRAS (Saracho, 1988) and the PRAI, a measure developed in the pilot study. Scores for all the children in the sample

are presented below (figures 7.2. and 7.3.). The PRAS consisted of 12 items with a range of one to three on each item. Total scores ranged from 12 (expressing the most negative attitude) to 36 (expressing the most positive attitude). The distribution of scores was positively skewed. Scores on the PRAI ranged from 16 to 48 and had a normal distribution. Of nineteen items on the scale three represented non-reading activities.

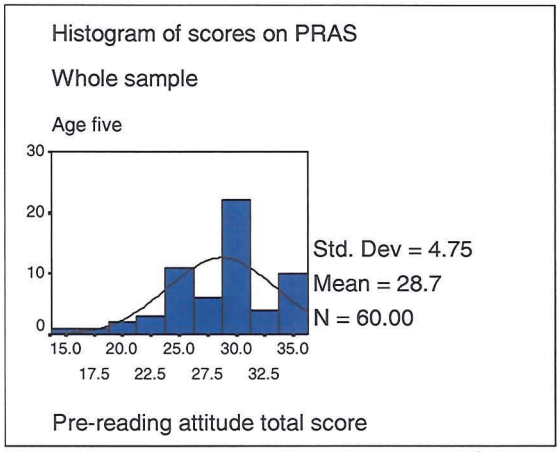


Figure 7.2 Histogram of scores on PRAS (whole sample, age five)

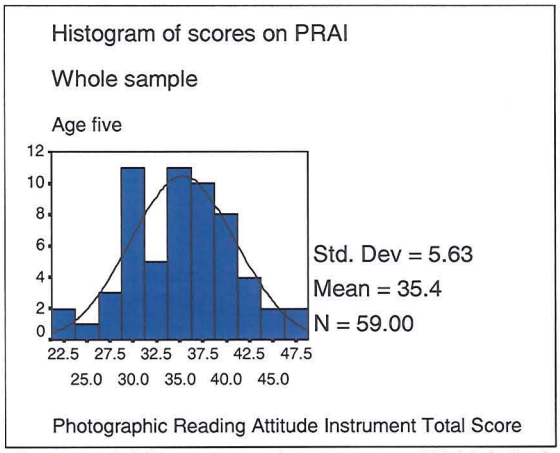


Figure 7.3 Histogram of scores on PRAI (whole sample, age five)

7.2.1. Relationship between PRAI and PRAS

Scores on the PRAS and the PRAI had a correlation of 0.47 ($p<0.01$) (figure 7.4). The correlation between the two scores suggested that both instruments were indeed measuring a single underlying attitudinal construct.

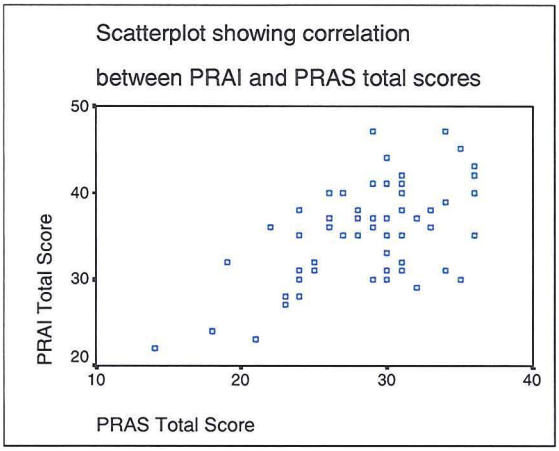


Figure 7.4 Scatterplot showing correlation between PRAI and PRAS total scores
Correlation 0.47 P< 0.01

The PRAI had not been validated against any other attitudinal test during the pilot study and the correlation found in this data set certainly offers concurrent validity for the PRAI while still reflecting the differences in the design of the two instruments. The PRAS had been designed specifically for American pre-school children and reflected only some of the experiences which would have been encountered by British children at a similar age. The PRAI on the other hand, had been developed with a sample of British children in school and reflected many more reading contexts (where and with whom they were reading) as well a broader range of content (what they were reading). These dimensions were explored further in the qualitative data obtained with the PRAI and the findings are presented in the next chapter.

7.3. Exploring the relationship between attitude toward reading and pre-reading skills

Attitude toward reading has been associated with reading ability in older children (see section 4.6.). Given the young age of the sample this association was investigated by looking at the correlation between attitude toward reading, vocabulary and phonological awareness. Phonological awareness has been widely recognised as a key element of early reading and a good predictor of later reading skills, of the "ease with which children learn to read" (Muter et al., 1997).

Phonological awareness and vocabulary scores were measured using PAT (Muter et al., 1997) and BPVS (Dunn, 1982) respectively. All boys in the sample were measured on four sub-tests of the PAT [5]. Distributions of these early literacy test scores are presented in Appendix 3, section A (figures A.3.1. - A.3.15). The PDBS and PDES both had a range of zero to eight. PDBS showed a bi-modal distribution with more children still unable to carry out the test than those able to do so. Fewer children were successful on the PDES than on the PDBS. A greater number of children were able to carry out the Rhyme Detection test successfully. Scores on this test were positively skewed. The test had a range of zero to ten and a third of the sample were able to gain the top score. The letter knowledge test (LKT) had a similar distribution; it too was positively skewed and just under a third of the sample gained full marks. The British Picture Vocabulary Test was used as a measure of word knowledge (Dunn, 1982). The distribution of scores on BPVS was approximately normal. These scores, which were standardised, had a range of 69 to 129.

	PRAI	PRAS	PDBS	PDES	RD	LKT	LITZ
PRAI	1.00	.47**	.28**	.15	.19	.17	0.26*[a]
PRAS	.47**	1.00	.01	-.18	.19	-.20	-.01
PDBS	.28*	.01	1.00	.61**	.05	.39**	0.73**
PDES	.15	-.18	.61**	1.00	.18	.44**	0.81**
RD	.19	.19	.05	.18	1.00	.29*	0.54**
LKT	.18	-.2	.39**	.44**	.29*	1.00	.74**
BPVS	.08	-.09	.14	.24	.28*	.33**	0.30*

Table 7.1. Measures of correlation (Spearman's rho) between six measures of early reading development

* p< 0.01 ** p<0.05

Table 7.1. presents the correlations between these measures in the sample as a whole. Attitude measured with the PRAI showed a significant association with a standardised literacy score (0.26 p<0.05).

[5] PDBS: phoneme deletion beginning sound
PDE S: phoneme deletion end sound
RD: rhyme detection
LKT: letter knowledge

[a] This was measured with a Pearson correlation as both variables had a normal distribution.

7.4. Exploring the relationship between attitude toward reading, pre-reading skills and measures of home literacy among a sample of boys aged five

The association between home background and children's literacy development is well documented and the relevant literature was presented earlier (see Chapter 3). Less clear is nature of the dynamics between home and school. For instance, do particular educational settings encourage different beliefs or practices among parents, which might in turn affect the way children's reading develops?

The emergence of this triadic relationship was analysed through both parental interview and through the analysis of a number of measures selected to represent the home literacy environment, pre-reading skills and measures of attitude to reading. Data reflecting the home literacy environment of the boys were collected during the course of the parental interviews.

The measures which have been described earlier (see design of main study) are summarised below:

1. **Measures of home literacy**

- Mother's education (ME)
- Parent library membership (PLM)
- Child library membership (CLM)
- Number of books in the home
- Parent Title Recognition List (PTRL)

2. **Literacy activity in the home**

- Reading frequency
- Writing frequency
- Homework frequency
- Frequency of listening to tapes

3. **Parental beliefs**

- Importance of voluntary reading activities
- Importance of writing activities
- Importance of homework
- Importance of listening to story tapes

- Didactic scale (Stipek et al., 1992)

4. Literacy outcome measures

- Phoneme Deletion Beginning Sound (PDBS)
- Phoneme Deletion End Sound (PDES)
- Rhyme Detection (RD)
- Letter Knowledge Test (LKT)
- British Picture Vocabulary Scale (BPVS)
- Photographic Reading Attitude Instrument (PRAI)
- Pre-reading Attitude Scale (PRAS)

Results are presented in two stages. In this section relationships between measures of home literacy, pre-reading skills and attitude to reading are illustrated through the data collected for the whole sample, irrespective of the boys' educational settings. In section 7.5. these measures are analysed in the context of whether boys had been attending Nursery or Reception classes.

7.4.1. Whole sample data

Data showing the distribution of scores on the measures of home literacy can be found in Appendix 3, section B, (figures A.3.16 to A.3.29). Mother's education is negatively skewed with the almost half the sample not pursuing education after compulsory schooling. The majority of the sample belonged to a library and had over 50 children's books in their home. PTRL has an approximately normal distribution in the sample as a whole.

A correlation matrix of all these variables showed some significant associations. These are presented diagrammatically in Figure 7.5.

DIAGRAM OF STATISTICALLY SIGINIFICANT ASSOCIATIONS BETWEEN HOME BACKGROUND AND LITERACY SKILLS

Correlations significant 0.05 level or above

Measures of home literacy

CLM Child library membership

ME Mother's education

PTRL Parent title recognition list

PLM Parent library membership

Parental beliefs

IH importance of homework

IR importance reading

IW importance writing

ILT Importance of listening to tapes

Literacy outcomes measures

BPVS British Picture Vocabulary Scale

LKT Letter Knowledge Test

PDBS Phoneme Deletion Beginning Sound

PDES Phoneme Deletion End Sound

RD Rhyme Detection

Literacy activity in the home

LT Frequency of listening to tapes

HF Homework frequency

RF Reading frequency

WF Writing frequency

Figure 7.5 (a) Key to diagram 7.5

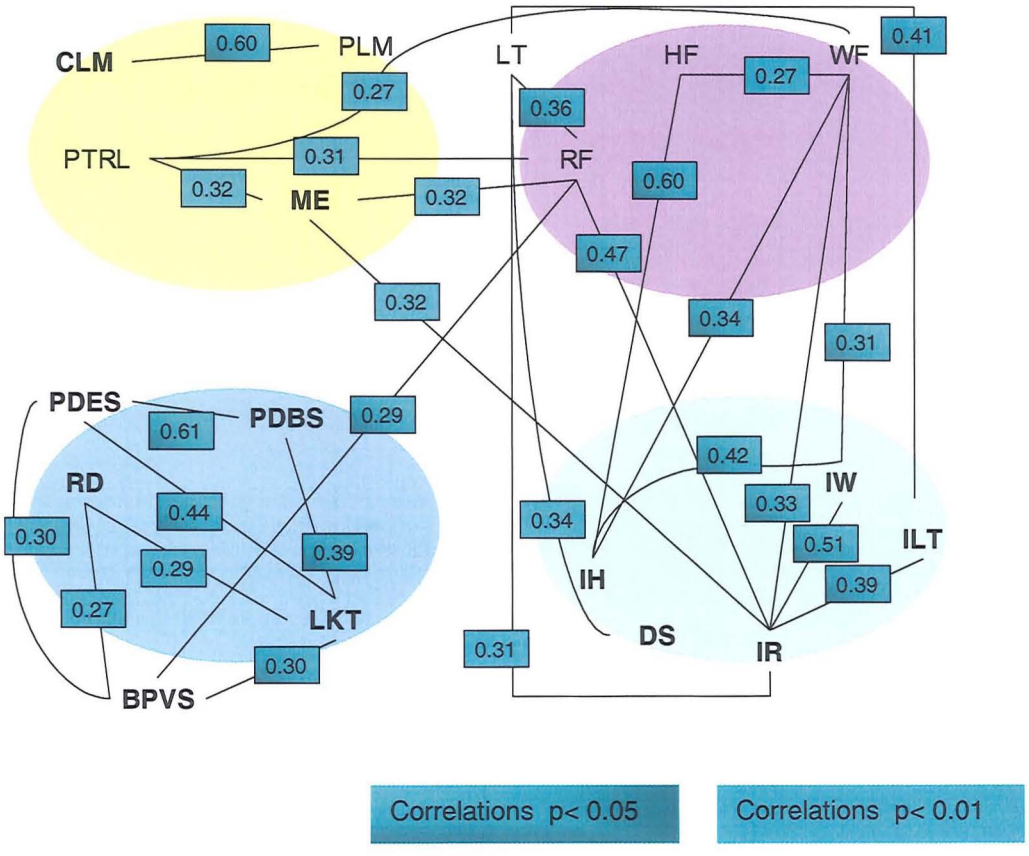


Figure 7.5 Relationship between measures of home literacy, literacy activity in the home, parental beliefs and literacy outcome measures (Spearman's rho)

7.4.2. Discussion

Data drawn from the whole sample has illustrated patterns within and relationships between the key measures adopted at the start of this study. They set the context for analysing the development of both attitudes towards reading and reading skills within the emerging triadic relationship between home, educational settings and pupils.

Measurement of reading attitude is a central focus of this study and, as noted, a significant relationship was found between scores on the PRAI and early reading skills. No association was found between PRAS and literacy scores. This may partly reflect the dimensions of attitude captured by the two instruments. The PRAS in particular focuses on pre-school experiences which are less likely to be associated with the acquisition of early reading skills and the attitudinal implications held by the process. The scale, composed of twelve items, measures four areas of reading activity: *school reading , non-school reading*, *library reading* and *general reading.* None of these items reflect situations in which the child is learning to read. *School reading* is defined as looking at books in the classroom or listening to the teacher read. In contrast the PRAI was designed to reflect situations in which children were beginning the process of learning to read and the results suggest that this instrument did reflect the difference. The PRAS attitudinal scores had a slight positive skew reflecting the typically positive attitudes of young children. As expected the PRAS scores suggested that most boys were happy with pre-school reading experiences. PRAI scores gave a normal distribution suggesting that more boys were not entirely happy with reading. Possibly the broader contexts of reading reflected in the PRAI, in particular the inclusion of the process of learning to read both at home and at school, gave rise to the broader spectrum of attitudes and this early association with achievement.

Among other measures of early literacy skills, letter knowledge was the only test which correlated significantly with all tests. As expected the two phoneme deletion tests correlated well with each other but neither test correlated with rhyme detection which was somewhat surprising. Nevertheless, given the significant correlation

between most of these measures they would appear to offer a good representation of the boys' reading-related skills at this very early stage.

Numerous studies have illustrated the association between mother's education and children's literacy development. The data drawn from the first cohort of this study suggested that this association might be influenced by reading patterns established and encouraged by mothers. Mother's education correlated significantly with both the frequency of voluntary reading and the importance attached to it. The involvement with boys' reading suggested by these two measures was further strengthened by the significant correlations between mothers' education and scores on the PTRL and PTRL with reading and writing frequency and the importance attached to reading.

Parental beliefs and reported frequency of activities correlated in each case. Associations were found between the importance attached to reading and frequency of reading activities, the importance attached to writing and frequency of writing activities, the importance attached to listening to tapes and frequency of listening to tapes and the importance attached to homework and frequency of homework.

These correlations suggested that parental beliefs were associated with patterns of literacy activity in the home. These patterns were in turn associated with measures of home literacy. However, neither measures of home literacy nor mother's education had any correlation with reading attitude scores or early literacy skills.

7.5. A comparison of reading attitude, pre-reading skills and home literacy environment in Reception and Nursery class boys

Further investigation of the data focussed on group differences, which might throw light on the triadic relationship between home, child and school. The following sections address themselves to these questions:

i Was there evidence of significant differences in terms of early literacy development between children with contrasting experiences of early education (Nursery versus Reception)?

ii Was there evidence of differences in terms of home literacy environment related to these contrasting experiences of early education?

7.5.1. Reading attitude scores and pre-reading skills

Reception and Nursery class groups were compared on the seven measures of early literacy development described earlier. These included two attitude toward reading scores and five measures of early literacy skills. Four tests were drawn from PAT (Muter, 1997) and vocabulary scores were measured using BPVS (Dunn, 1982). Results are presented in figures 7.6 and 7.7 and tables 7.2. to 7.5. below.

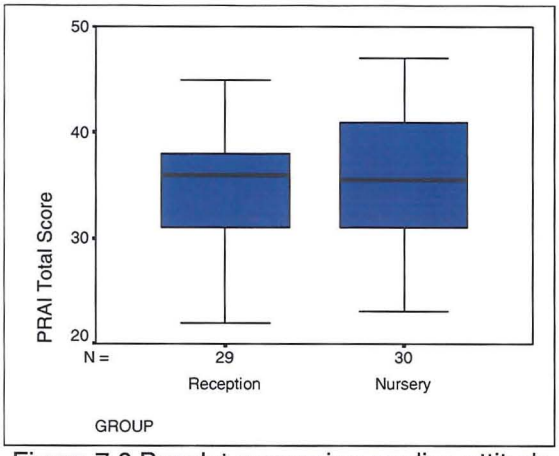


Figure 7.6 Boxplot comparing reading attitude of boys in Reception and Nursery classes using PRAI total scores

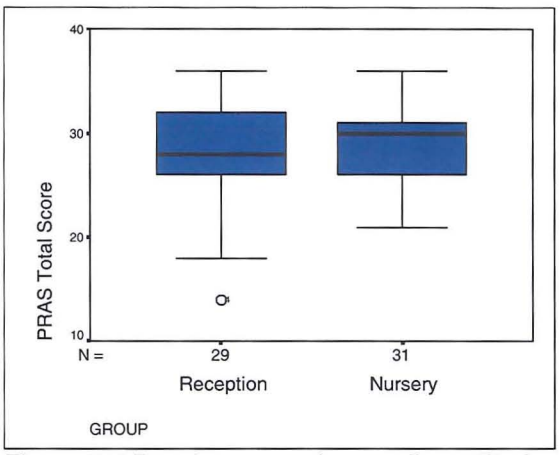


Figure 7.7 Boxplot comparing reading attitude of boys in Reception and Nursery classes using PRAS total scores

The two box plots show only minor differences between the two groups. On both instruments the most negative quartile reflects slightly stronger negative attitudes among boys with Reception class experience. The only outlier, reflecting an extreme negative attitude, is also a Reception class boy. Both instruments record a very low score for this child. No statistically significant differences were found between boys in the two groups on either of the two attitudinal measures (tables 7.2 and 7.3) nor on any of the measures of pre-reading skills (tables 7.4 and 7.5).

	GROUP	N	Mean	Std Dev.	Std. Error Mean
PRAI Total Score	Reception	29	35.00	5.19	0.69
	Nursery	30	35.70	6.02	1.11
PRAS Total Score	Reception	29	28.21	5.27	0.98
	Nursery	31	29.21	4.24	0.76

Table 7.2 Mean scores of reading attitude of Reception and Nursery class boys at age five

Independent Samples Test

		t-test for Equality of Means		
		t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
PRAI Total Score	Equal variances assumed	-.47	57.00	.64
	Equal variances not assumed	-.48	56.12	.64
PRAS Total Score	Equal variances assumed	-.80	58.00	.43
	Equal variances not assumed	-.80	53.78	.43

Table 7.3 T test comparing reading attitude scores of Nursery and Reception class boys

Group Statistics

	GROUP	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Rhyme Detection PAT	Reception	29	6.72	2.88	.53
	Nursery	30	6.43	2.96	.54
Phoneme Deletion Beginning Sound PAT	Reception	28	3.39	3.55	.67
	Nursery	30	2.47	3.25	.59
Phoneme Deletion End Sound PAT	Reception	28	3.39	3.14	.59
	Nursery	30	2.50	2.84	.52
Letter Knowledge Test PAT	Reception	29	18.93	7.83	1.45
	Nursery	29	15.62	8.23	1.53
British Picture Vocabulary Scale Raw Score	Reception	28	105.14	12.13	2.29
	Nursery	31	104.06	16.18	2.91

Table 7.4 Mean scores of pre-reading skills

Independent Samples Test

		t-test for Equality of Means		
		t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Rhyme Detection PAT	Equal variances assumed	.38	57.00	.70
	Equal variances not assumed	.38	57.00	.70
Phoneme Deletion Beginning Sound PAT	Equal variances assumed	1.04	56.00	.30
	Equal variances not assumed	1.03	54.60	.31
Phoneme Deletion End Sound PAT	Equal variances assumed	1.14	56.00	.26
	Equal variances not assumed	1.13	54.40	.26
Letter Knowledge Test PAT	Equal variances assumed	1.57	56.00	.12
	Equal variances not assumed	1.57	55.87	.12
British Picture Vocabulary Scale Raw Score	Equal variances assumed	.29	57.00	.78
	Equal variances not assumed	.29	55.20	.77

Table 7.5 t-test comparing pre-reading skills scores of Reception and Nursery class boys

7.5.2. Home literacy environment

The home literacy environment of boys in Reception and Nursery classes was compared on all measures outlined earlier. The results are presented in Appendix 3, section C encompassing the three categories identified as:

- measures of home literacy
- literacy activity in the home
- parental beliefs.

Mothers' qualifications were slightly higher in the Reception class group. Six parents[6] in the Reception class group, compared to none in the Nursery class group, had degrees or postgraduate qualifications. A difference in scores in the PTRL reached near significance ($p < 0.07$) and was associated with mother's education (ME). A correlation of rho=0.32 ($p<0.05$) between ME and PTRL was found in the sample as a whole and of rho=0.48 ($p<0.01$) in the Reception class group. When the six most highly qualified mothers were excluded, there was no difference between the groups on PTRL.

7.5.3. Discussion of results

Given the known association between mother's education and children's literacy achievement, a group comparison of a sub-sample of the Reception class group was conducted. This sample excluded mothers with degree level or higher qualifications. Means for all the tests reported for the whole sample were lower in the Reception sub-sample with the exception of letter knowledge, which increased from a mean of 18.93 to 19.63, and BPVS which showed a much smaller positive increase from a mean of 105.14 to a mean of 105.22.

Within the whole sample, mean scores on phonological awareness tests and BPVS (table 7.4) were higher for the Reception class group but the differences were reduced or reversed on all except two scores when mother's education was controlled through the sub-sample analysis. The notable exception was on the letter recognition test. Here

[6] The mother of twins appears twice in the count

the group difference only just failed to reach statistical significance ($p<0.06$). This result may well reflect the emphasis placed on phonological awareness and decoding skills in the early stages of teaching reading. This emphasis would appear to be particularly strong in the Reception class setting where routines had become more formalised. Data from interviews with both the boys and their parents (chapter 8 and 12) would seem to lend support to the importance attached to this dimension of reading acquisition in the Reception class year.

In spite of this single difference, the results suggested that the boys were acquiring a broad range of literacy skills as efficiently in part-time Nursery education as within full-time school. Parental interviews highlighted the immense parental concern about children who miss out on Reception class education, a concern focussed almost entirely on the academic disadvantages. This concern was not borne out by the findings from this small sample of boys. The standardised composite literacy score yielded no significant group differences.

A regression analysis (appendix 3 section D) confirmed that PTRL but not mother's education was a significant predictor of literacy achievement. This suggests that PTRL was a more accurate indicator of parental involvement with their children's literacy activity and provides a useful home literacy measure. Group differences did not account for literacy outcome scores.

Comparison of the same sub-group on measures of reading attitude, yielded reading attitude scores which were higher for boys in the Nursery class group but these differences also failed to reach statistical significance. Neither PTRL nor mother's education were significant predictors of reading attitude outcome as measured with the PRAI, but mother's education did predict attitudinal outcome on the PRAS, a measure not associated with the process of learning to read and perhaps for this reason more directly related to mother's education than the PRAI, whose scores were likely to have been affected by school factors (appendix 3 Section D).

A significant association between reading attitude (PRAI) and reading skill was found only among the Nursery class group (0.38 $p<0.05$). Scatterplots comparing these relationships (Appendix 3 section E) illustrated how the majority of Nursery boys who scored well in literacy also held positive reading attitudes; this was not the case for Reception class boys.

Sub-sample comparisons demonstrated that these relationships were not affected by mother's education or PTRL suggesting that school factors were acting detrimentally on boys' reading attitudes even when the boys were achieving well. Since the process of learning to read and accompanying expectations were more strongly established in Reception classes than in the Nursery classes, it is likely that this process was leading to the poorer attitudes among the high achievers.

Though measures of attitude were not significantly different for the two groups of boys, it should be noted that the boy with extreme negative attitudes, shown as an outlier in figure 7.7, belonged to the Reception class group. In examining this case further, it became apparent that these attitudes reflected not so much a general dislike of books but a school-related dislike of the kind of compulsory reading which did not occur in the less formal Nursery setting. This feeling was shared by a number of Reception class boys. The following chapter uses the boys' reading attitude scores to launch a far deeper inquiry into their reading attitudes, incorporating their feelings and beliefs about reading and how these are reflected in their reading routines.

CHAPTER 8

UNDERSTANDING BOYS' ATTITUDES TOWARDS READING: A QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS

8.1. Qualitative methodology: a rationale

Attitudinal scores among young children are known to have a positive bias and the positive skew of the reading attitude scores collected at age five typically reflected this pattern. As such they serve as general indicators but could not probe the diversity and complexity of the ideas on which they were founded. Exploration of the reading attitude construct demands more illustrative data which can describe and record the emergence and development of the concepts by which it is shaped. A qualitative methodology seemed to provide better tools with which to conduct this investigation. It aimed to shed light on the boys' likes and dislikes in reading, hidden in the purely quantitative measurements yielded by the attitudinal scales.

Informal conversational interviews allowed the boys to express their attitudes about reading within a neutral and non-judgmental context. The open-ended and semi-structured technique of data collection provided ample opportunity for them to explore a range of reading experiences both as observers and participants. The study adopted a view of "literacy as a social practice" (Moss, 1999b) in which the social setting plays a critical role in determining the nature of children's experiences with reading and hence attitudinal outcomes. According to Moss, this setting, together with the social activity between participants, defines the purpose of reading and determines the nature of the event for the reader. This analysis focused on the child's perspective of both setting and participants. Interview-type data and qualitative analysis sought to portray a picture of how boys at ages five, six and seven, understand their reading experiences and how this understanding defines their reading attitudes.

8.2. Method

At each period of data collection, time was allocated to talk to each boy individually for a period of up to twenty minutes. Where possible the schools and Nurseries arranged a quiet area for this purpose. Unfortunately, this was not always available and in one Nursery and one Reception class, lack of accommodation prevented these sessions from taking place. Poor sound quality in others led to some tape-recordings being discarded subsequently so that in all, from a sample of 60 boys, 47 tape-recordings were available for analysis prior to entry to Year One, 52 at the end of Year One and 57 at the end of Year Two.

A number of photographs selected from the PRAI scale were presented to the children as a stimulus to generate their ideas about various reading situations. The content was as follows:

- a girl reading on her own
- two boys sitting on a couch sharing a book
- young children selecting and looking at books from a book box
- a boy reading on his own
- a teacher reading a story to the class
- a boy sitting with a man (interpreted as father), both are looking at a book
- a boy sitting with a lady (interpreted as mother) both are looking at a book
- a boy looking at a large pictorial book about sea creatures
- a boy looking at a comic
- a boy with a lady (interpreted as mother or teacher) looking at a book together
- a teacher with a group of children all looking at the same book
- an elderly man (mainly interpreted as grandfather) and boy looking at a book together

The boys were asked to describe what they saw in the photograph and then encouraged to relate the situation to themselves. In spite of the photographic stimuli and the informal nature of the interaction, many of the boys found the task of talking about and responding to the stimuli, a challenging one. Although only one boy

actually refused to co-operate, many others responded with short and uninformative answers and could not be encouraged to elaborate.

As expected these conversational interviews became longer and of more substance as the boys grew older. The subject matter ranged widely and this analysis was an attempt to systematise how these children described the process of learning to read, focussing on the attitudes that accompanied the process as they progressed through Key Stage One. These attitudes were interpreted in their widest sense to incorporate the complex structure discussed in chapter four. The collection and analysis of data was driven by the objective of examining the development of boys' reading attitudes over time and according to their early years experience.

Specifically, the analysis aimed:

1) To explore:

- the nature of boys' positive and negative attitudes regarding reading and identifying the context of these attitudes
- boys' understanding of a variety of reading situations including: teacher story-time, sharing books, visiting a library
- boys' concepts about the functions of reading
- boys' concepts about the role of parents and teachers in their reading activities

2) To establish whether there was evidence of between-group differences in any of these concepts

3) To trace how these concepts changed over time

This qualitative analysis was supported by the use of the software QSR NU.DIST (4). Coding categories evolved during analysis and the tree diagram in figure 8.1 represents these categories in their final format. The codes, or 'nodes', which are defined individually below, were developed for boys in both groups at each point of data collection.

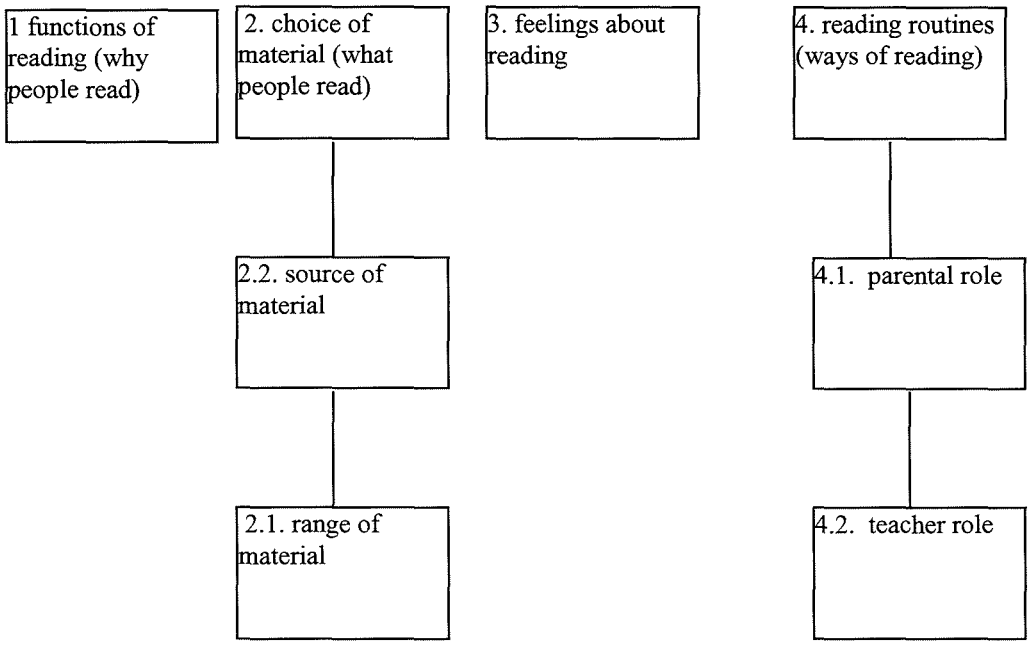
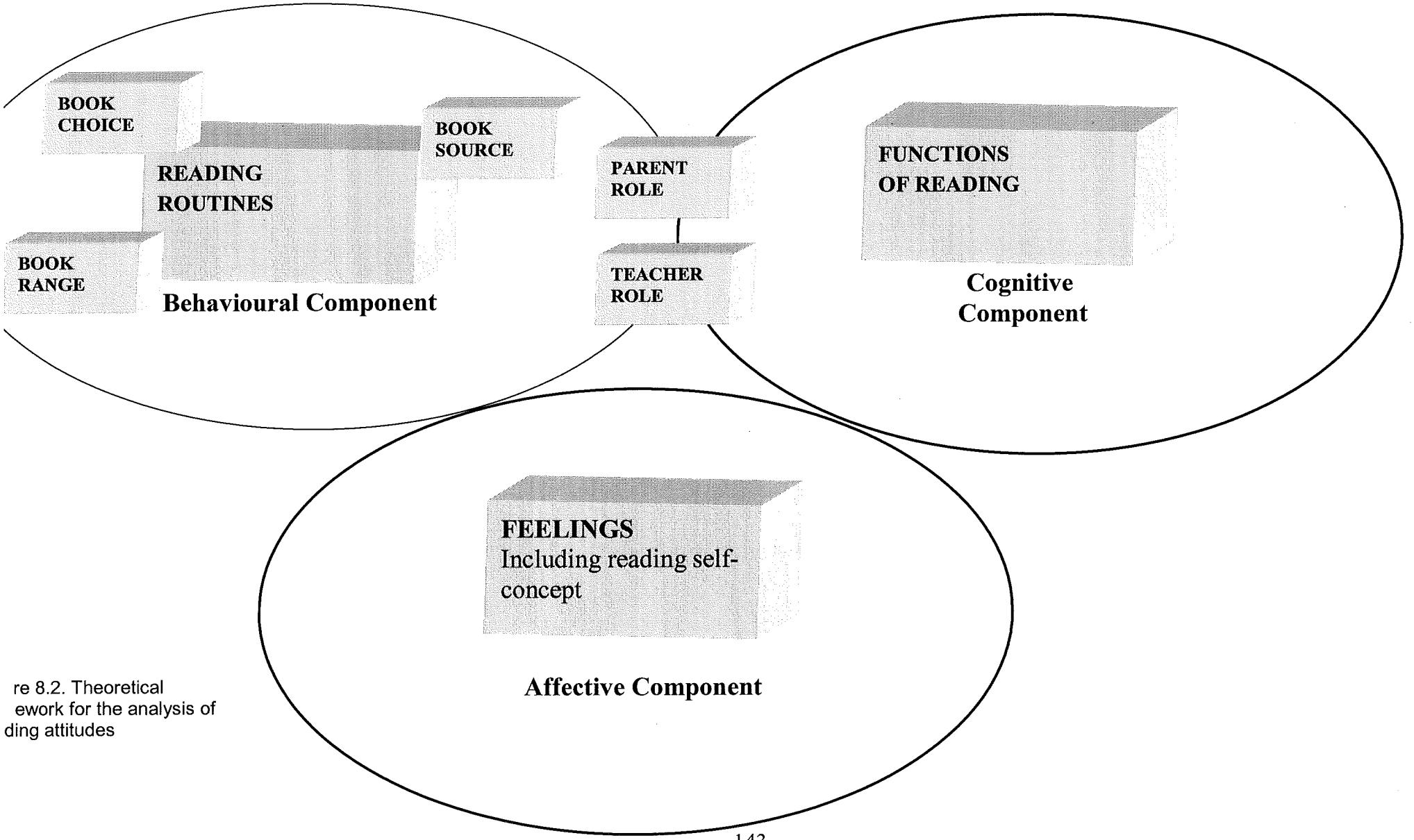


Figure 8.1. tree diagram of coding categories (nodes) evolved during qualitative analysis of boys' reading attitudes at age five

Definition of 'nodes':

1. Reasons/purposes for reading expressed
2. How boys choose books
2.1. Descriptions of books in terms of content or title, familiarity with different genres
2.2. Breadth of experience with obtaining books and other reading material eg. library, shops
3. How boys feel about reading
4. Patterns of reading as described by the boys
4.1. How boys describe and feel about the parental role in reading activities
4.2. How boys view the role of the teacher in reading activities

These codes grew from the substance of the transcripts but analysis of the inter-relationships of the codes led to a structure which reflected the traditional tri-partite conceptualisation of reading attitude. Illustrated in figure 8.2, it forms the basis of this chapter's analysis which begins by looking at the affective component of reading attitude descriptively, and then tries to throw light on its emergence by analysing the cognitive components of reading and their association with affect. Finally, it draws on actual experience as perceived by the boys. The behavioural component is described and links with both the affective and cognitive components of reading attitude are traced.



re 8.2. Theoretical
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8.3. Identifying boys on the attitude spectrum

The quantitative analysis prior to entry into Year One measured boys' reading attitudes using two scales, the PRAS and the PRAI. (Both instruments have been described earlier). For the purpose of this qualitative analysis, data from these scales were used to identify the position of individual boys within the attitude spectrum. Scores were standardised and the total scores from the two instruments were calculated. Following the classification of Chapman, Tunmer and Prochnow (Chapman, 2000), boys with positive attitudes were identified as those scoring in the top 15% of the score distribution, while those with negative attitudes were defined as those in the lowest 15% of the distribution. Table 8.1. and 8.2 present the distributions of the standardised scores and provide a relative classification of the boys' attitudes toward reading . Boys highlighted in blue are those, whose transcripts were not available for analysis. None of the boys are identified by their true names.

Statistics

ATTITUDE

N	Valid	59
	Missing	1
Mean		1.68E-02
Median		.17
Std. Deviation		1.78
Minimum		-5.47
Maximum		3.18
Percentiles	15	-1.77
	85	1.76

Table 8.1 statistics of reading attitude standardised scores

STANDARDIZED SCORE	RECEPTION BOY	NURSERY BOY
- 5.47	Alex	
-4.27	Joel	
-3.82		Dennis
-2.69		Rob
-2.64	Harry	
-2.51		Darren
-2.30		Dan
-1.94	Hideo	
-1.77		Jack
-1.56	Richard	
-1.38	Henry	
-1.30		Damion
-1.06		Saul
-.89		Cameron
-.68	Frank	Rowan
-52	Amit	
-.50	Charles	
-.46	Arthur	
-.44	Arnold	
-.42	Michael	
-.29		Billy
-.28	Rajiv	
-.21	Martin	Neil
-.15		Tim, Jeffrey

-.12		Peter
.14	Benjamin	
.17		Boris
.21		Lawrence
.25	Matthew	
.32	Jed	
.34	Zak	
.35	Kenny	
.37		Alan
.42	Jonathan	
.46	Adam	
.56	William	
.95		Terry, Jasper
.98	Darryl	
1.02		Kevin
1.06		Justin
1.27		Derrick
1.37	Brian	
1.47	Percy	
1.48		Jeremy
1.66	Jim	
1.76	Graham	
1.81		Bruno
2.13		Simon
2.71	Gabriel	Eric
2.89		Collin
3.04	Ricki	
3.18		Oscar

Table 8.2. Reading attitude standardised scores
(boys highlighted in blue: transcripts were not available)

8.4. An introduction to boys' reading attitudes at age five: the affective dimension

The attitudinal sub-groups defined quantitatively provided the initial structure for analysing the affective component of attitude qualitatively. The analysis compared

data from boys in the low scoring group to both the high scoring and 'typical' middle range score groups. While not every boy has been cited individually, boys from each of the three attitudinal sub-groups were represented. The representation, illustrated in Appendix 4, section A, included boys from both the Nursery and the Reception class groups. While incorporating boys from each of the three attitudinal sub-groups, the analysis focussed on those at the extremes, seeking to identify what distinguished those particular boys and to determine whether the data could point to the sources of such outcomes. The exploration of the affective component of the reading attitude construct depended on self-referential data in which the child became a participant rather than an observer. This set some boundaries to the quantity of data available for analysis as much of the data was not of a personal nature. This less personal data was useful for the analysis of the cognitive and behavioural components of reading attitudes but it did not shed much light on the affective dimension.

This 'transparent' or 'emotive' data included expressions of the boys' personal 'likes' and 'dislikes', their perceptions of difficulties associated with reading and of their own competence or otherwise, in reading. Such evidence was found across the sample but emerged most explicitly within the negative attitude group. In contrast, positive attitudes remained somewhat hazy, with few boys openly expressing an enjoyment of reading in spite of their high scores.

8.5. Examining negative reading attitudes at age five

Eight boys were identified as holding very poor attitudes towards reading prior to entering Year One (see appendix 4, section A). Of these, the two boys with lowest scores, both in the Reception class group, offered remarkably explicit commentaries on their negative feelings.

Alex expressed his thoughts about reading vehemently, reflecting his low reading attitude score: "Those children are reading a book", "I don't like it", "it's stupid', "I hate it". The expression "I hate" was re-iterated three times during our conversation although Alex could only hint at the source of these intensely negative feelings. He referred to the stories read by his teacher as "silly" and mentioned that he hated

"sitting on the carpet", presumably his school story-time routine. Alex was aware that others did enjoy reading but viewed reading himself as a compulsory activity he was unable to explain: "They don't like it but they're doing it". As far as he was concerned it remained a purposeless and disliked activity. It was interesting to note that he claimed never to read with either of his parents, a claim not substantiated by the parental interview.

Joel (R) had similar scores on the attitude scales, but expressed his dislike less vehemently, hinting at its school-based source. Joel was reluctant to read himself but was able to enjoy stories. "I'd feel happy if my mum was reading it to me," and "I only like it when my mum reads my own books to me". His enthusiasm for the illustrations contrasted sharply with his reluctance to read, ("I **have** to learn to read") and all school reading situations. Visits to the library were viewed as a school routine but not one which was much enjoyed and his response to listening to teachers read was half-hearted: "It feels OK".

Harry, who belonged to Alex's Reception class also fell into the low scoring group and like him did not enjoy listening to teachers reading stories. Instead of representing cosy, relaxing periods, these reading sessions seemed to be associated with general discomfort. Harry found this activity uncomfortable and saw no purpose to it: "when I sit down I get very hot". He struggled with the technicalities of reading. Spelling things out was a dominating and 'hard' process demanded both in the school setting and by his parents at home. Similarly, mother played a teacher role in reading. "She has to look at the book to see if it's the right word". Harry had certainly not rejected reading in the same way as Alex but both the physical context of reading and the demands placed by teachers and parents on the child for correct reading, engendered negative feelings. The transcript, supported by low scores, suggested a paucity of motivation to read and little detailed knowledge about books. Harry did not seem able to recall specific stories by their title, talking only in general terms about their subject matter. He spoke of 'scary stories', 'animal stories', and 'Jesus stories'. Most reading situations were engineered by others rather than self-motivated.

Arnold, also a Reception class child, shared both Joel's and Harry's mixture of feelings about reading. There were reading experiences which he clearly enjoyed, corroborated by comments such as "I like books", "I like it when I look at books", "I like it when my teacher reads me a story". He talked enthusiastically about The Very Hungry Caterpillar, The Lion King and was also keen and somewhat of an expert on comics. He showed an interest in non-fiction books for their subject matter. Like the child in the picture who enjoys the book because "he likes sea-animals", Arnold liked the book shown in the picture "because in the sea I like great white sharks". At the same time Arnold had already formed a clear idea that he did not like reading himself. Arnold resented being told to read and recognised this situation in several of the pictures he was shown, "He's looking at a book and his dad was telling him to read it and I don't like reading books". In this case the father had adopted the teacher's role and was there to make sure the child read correctly: "looking if he's doing all the words right". In this child's experience the mother too adopted a teacher-type role. Arnold did not like "when my mum tells me to read the books". Elsewhere he referred again to his dislike of compulsory reading activities. In relation to one of the photographs presented he explained this further: "she's making him do reading and because he made a book for himself and he writed all the words and he can't read all the words that he writed". In contrast Arnold enjoyed being read to by his teacher, an activity in which no expectations were placed upon him as a pupil. He commented: "I like it when people look at a story with me".

Clearly, there was some friction between the child's original enjoyment of books, both narrative and pictures, and the demands placed upon him to acquire the skills to become an independent reader. His environment placed firm priority on the latter so that even though Arnold had not yet reached the statutory age for starting school, reading had already become a school-like task. Independent reading was a compulsory activity bringing with it expectations of performance of which Arnold was very aware. Concern for the acquisition of reading skills remained of paramount concern to him and a year later the friction was unresolved. His later development is examined in the following chapters.

The four Nursery class boys in the low scoring group were far less explicit about their dislikes. This was partly a reflection of the difficulty these children had in responding verbally to the pictures but the transcripts also suggested little familiarity with books and reading. Two boys were unable to recall the title of any story [Darren (N) and Dan (N)] and their transcripts suggested a general lack of exposure to books in home and school (see Appendix 4, section B).

As illustrated through Arnold's transcript negative strands of reading attitude were not confined to the lowest scoring boys. The level of difficulty of books was a re-current theme across the sample. Several boys mentioned their preference for short and easy books. Lawrence in Nursery liked most reading situations but: "If they're too small letters I can't read" and Matthew, a Reception class child, felt his reading was restricted to schoolbooks "I can't read. Only school books". Terry (N) on the other hand preferred his schoolbooks: "Our school books haven't got any writing". Clearly, in the Nursery environment, he was able to enjoy a narrative without the expectation which often accompanied the reading of the text. William, an able Reception class child, predicted he "would feel sad" if he were "stuck" with a difficult passage to read.

8.6. Discussion of negative reading attitudes expressed at age five

In spite of the limitations of the data imposed by the sample's size and their young age, the boys' comments displayed a surprising intensity of feeling which, even if it belonged to a minority, deserves to be heard and acted upon. These concerns may often be obscured by the typically positive bias in attitudinal data collected from young children. They may also be over-looked within a busy classroom where assessment is predominantly concerned with well-defined skills. While this study could not give evidence as to the extent of these concerns it provided a vivid picture of their presence.

By their fifth birthday some boys in this study were expressing misgivings about the well-established routine of story time in school while others were experiencing

parental pressure and/or school pressure to learn to read correctly. Some had already made a distinction in their own mind between reading and 'school reading' books which restricted in their own mind what they were able to do and challenged their own perception of confidence. At the same time parents, keen to establish their children as independent readers, were introducing reading practice times seemingly at the expense of more traditional story times, ignoring both their boys' resistance to this particular task and their boys' wider interest in a broad range of books.

Although no significant between-group attitudinal differences had been found in the quantitative analysis, the negative examples discussed here were generated almost exclusively by Reception class boys. This was probably not coincidental: the themes which characterized the negative attitudes expressed were the product of the more formal school setting of the Reception class and for the most part not relevant to those boys whose only experience so far was in part-time Nursery education. As an integrated element of school, the Reception class seemed to be driven by the objectives of Key Stage One rather than the guidelines of the Foundation Stage. As pointed out in a recent paper by Ginsborg (Locke, 2002) "a different set of specific targets, to do with literacy, loom on the horizon that is Year One". These targets were apparently influencing the experiences of the Reception boys more than their counterparts in part-time Nursery units.

These boys' experiences reflect similar factors to those identified by Moss as influential in accentuating gender differences (Moss, 1999a). The interim report from the Fact and Fiction Research project found that the school reading curriculum was dominated by "concerns for reading proficiency" and that "anxiety about how children are getting on with reading is high" (Moss, 1999a section 1.1). Moss pointed out how children themselves have become very aware of features such as print size, length of the books and use of illustrations as indicators of reading level. She suggested that boys and girls have different sorts of response to these concerns: "Where proficiency judgements are made highly visible, weaker boy readers, unlike weaker girl readers, spend an inordinate amount of time in flight from such judgements. They put a lot of energy into disguising their lower status and escaping from the consequences of that designation." While the Fact and Fiction project

focused on the seven to nine age group, as the age at which children begin to read independently, data from this study shows that the anxieties of children and parents begin to emerge early in Key Stage One. Boys from the 'negative attitude' group offered evidence that the concern for reading proficiency, with its manifold implication for boys' self-concept as readers, takes root at the very earliest stages of learning to read.

8.7. Examining positive reading attitudes at age five

The composition of the positive attitude group in terms of numbers was very similar to that of the negative attitude group. But the analysis of these boys' transcripts suggested that, in the majority of cases, this apparently 'positive' attitude was not driven by particular positive experiences with books but rather the absence, as yet, of negative ones. Of those who scored highly at age five only a small proportion remained keen readers by age six.

Gabriel (R) was quite typical of this group in conveying no enthusiasm about books in spite of his high attitude scores. His very limited discourse about books suggested a somewhat limited exposure to books confirmed by parental questionnaire and interview data. Book ownership was low in terms of the sample as a whole, somewhere between 10 and 50 children's books. The vast majority of this sample claimed to own over 50 children's books. His mother scored 12 on the Title Recognition List, a score representing the mean within a range of 1 to 35.

Weinberger suggested that the favourite book was a way of "gauging children's level of experience and interest" (Weinberger, 1996 p. 46). Gabriel (R) was unable to name a favourite book although he described one that suggested some sort of encyclopaedia or information book. He did enjoy his father reading to him but was indifferent to stories he heard at school. When asked whether he enjoyed his teacher's stories he replied: "not so much". Gabriel (R) seemed to view reading as a compulsory task. The boy "has to read" to the teacher because "he'll learn from books". Eric had a similar profile. In spite of questionnaire data which suggested he had over fifty children's

books at home, his mother scored 12 on the TRT (Title Recognition List) and Eric mentioned no books by name although he was familiar with the comic Sonic. Again the transcript did not reflect his attitudinal scores. Ricki was also unable to talk about specific books and like Gabriel, saw reading as a compulsory activity. His mother recognized only two children's titles in the TRT in spite of claiming to own more than 50 children's books. It is interesting note that by age six none of these children were in the positive attitude group and indeed Ricki (R) had become part of the negative attitude group. The high attitudinal scores of these three boys seemed to reflect a generally positive outlook, more than a particular attraction towards books. Certainly the data did not provide confirmatory evidence for these scores.

Just a few boys in the 'typical' range expressed their own positive attitudes openly: "Cos we thought it would be nice" Arthur (R), "I like reading them" Jonathan(R) and Graham (R). Most, as will be shown, recognised enjoyment as a function of reading but this was rarely reflected in personalised statements.

Jim (R) , Oscar (N)and Jeremy (N), all mentioned a favourite title. Jim was a regular library visitor and was familiar with a range of titles including traditional fairy tales and children's favourites such as Thomas the Tank Engine. Oscar also mentioned traditional fairy tales, including Goldilocks and Little Red Riding Hood. Jeremy did not elaborate in great detail on his experience with books but was quite clear that Elmer, a colourful picture book about an elephant, was his firm favourite. Collin, also a high scorer at age five and six mentioned pictures as an important part of his enjoyment and although he could not a cite a favourite book by name explained that he liked a crocodile book because of his "snappy teeth".

8.8. Discussion of positive reading attitudes expressed at age five

The picture of positive reading attitudes at age five lacked the clarity found in the data of boys who had developed negative attitudes. There was little data expressing enthusiasm for reading in general and just a few examples of boys who expressed positive feelings towards particular books. The ability to cite a favourite title, was not

in itself an indication of a positive reading attitude. Even boys with the most hostile attitude toward reading in general could cite titles which they enjoyed.

The data suggested that the positive reading attitudes of boys at age five were neither clearly formulated nor firmly entrenched. Rather they appeared to be a reflection of generally positive attitudes, unscathed by negative experiences with reading. This may account for the greater number of Nursery group boys in the positive attitude range. Their experience of reading, though in some cases quite scant, did not show evidence of the concerns generated within the Reception class group. As such they proved to be quite volatile.

The targets of the Key Stage One literacy curriculum were again in evidence among the few Reception class boys in this high scoring group but these concerns had not had detrimental outcomes in terms of their attitudinal scores. Rather they were reflected in the cognitive and behavioural dimensions of their reading attitude development.

8.9. A functional perspective: boys' ideas about the purposes of reading at age five

As illustrated theoretically in figure 8.2., the feelings associated with reading form a vital component of reading attitude. But these feelings must be analysed in the context of their reciprocal relationship with both the cognitive and behavioural components of reading attitude.

Previous studies (see section 4.5. literature review) have focussed on the construct of reading attitude through a functional perspective where dimensions of reading were defined by a range of 'reasons for reading'. These reading dimensions were identified in children aged eight and over.

The present study adopted a similar theoretical framework, incorporating boys' ideas about the function of reading within the cognitive component of attitude. Adopting a qualitative methodology, the study sought to describe the emergence of boys' ideas about the purposes of reading as they reached the age of compulsory schooling. It considered the development of these concepts within the context of their earliest experiences of 'formal' education and sought also to trace changes over time through Key Stage One.

The source of data for this analysis was the 47 transcripts described earlier and was based on boys' understanding of a range of different reading contexts as portrayed in the photographic stimuli. These contexts yielded a variety of interpretations and suggested that by their fifth birthday boys had acquired quite explicit and wide-ranging ideas about why people read. Only three boys were unable to suggest any functions at all, two from the Reception class group and one from the Nursery class group (Hideo, Brian, and Oscar). This was not attributable to the boys' 'feelings' about reading. Their attitudinal scores fell across the spectrum of 'affect', with one in each of the ranges defined earlier as 'negative', 'typical' or 'positive'. Rather, they shared an inability to verbalize their ideas about the purposes of reading, all three responding poorly to the open-ended type of interaction demanded of them.

Data summarizing the purposes of reading as viewed by this group of boys is tabulated in Appendix 4, section C. The most frequently cited purpose for reading was that defined in previous studies of older children as 'enjoyment'. This dimension was suggested by almost the entire sample and was most frequently alluded to through the use of the word 'like'. 'They like reading books", [Harry(R)], was an expression repeated with slight variation throughout all the transcripts. For some the experience was expressed even more positively. Children read because: "it's lovely", "he loves stories" [Saul(N)], "it's fun" [Ricki (R)]. For others, the enjoyment factor was less explicit but appeared to be present: "because he wanted to read" [Alan (N)], "cos he felt like it" [Joel (R)]. The idea was prevalent among this sample Only five children failed to make any reference to enjoyment as a possible purpose of reading, including the three boys who had made no reference to function. Jeremy a Nursery group boy in the attitude high scoring group saw reading as a way to alleviate boredom, a function defined distinctly from enjoyment (Neuman, 1980) but quite closely related. He also talked about reading for the purpose of information, "to know about". Charles from the Reception class group, had a rather more restricted perspective, clearly influenced by his own educational setting, in which the purpose of reading lay in developing reading skills: "to learn how to read".

In addition to the 'enjoyment' factor, reading was quite widely held to be a compulsory activity, brought about by instructions to read from an adult. The adult was often the teacher, "the teacher said he has to read a book" [Neil (N)], but frequently included also 'mum' or 'dad'.

This compulsory strand to reading was far more in evidence among the children of the Reception class, as was the associated purpose of 'learning'. Only six Nursery class boys mentioned reading as a compulsory activity. In four cases the children have been "told" to read by the teacher. Two of these boys were in the lowest 15th percentile group on the reading attitude scores as presented in appendix 4, section A. For the other two Nursery class boys, reading was only compulsory in so far that it was embedded in a fixed routine. Both of these boys were at the higher end of the attitude scores. Almost twice as many references were made to compulsory reading among the Reception class children, in spite of this being a smaller group (22 Reception class

and 25 Nursery class transcripts were collected). As with the Nursery class children, some compulsory reading was linked to school routines: "My teacher said (to) them 'sit down with a book" [Matthew (R)]. But, for a couple of children within the Reception class group, compulsory reading had also begun to become a feature of home life. One boy talked of both mother and father, on separate occasions, "making him do reading" [Arnold (R)]. The concept of reading in order to learn how to read was also in evidence, a forerunner of the 'utilitarian' dimension identified in previous studies Four Reception class children thought the reading was taking place so that they could learn: "you have to learn" [Gabriel (R)]. This idea did not appear in any of the Nursery boys' transcripts. The data gave strong indication of the influence of a more formal curriculum being implemented in the Reception class and of that curriculum influencing the way these children were thinking about reading.

The idea of reading as a compulsory activity was only just beginning to emerge. Thirteen boys referred to it explicitly as a reason for reading although almost always beside other reasons. Of these thirteen, five boys had very or fairly poor attitudes toward reading as defined by their attitude scores (Appendix 4, section A). These numbers were not significant in quantitative terms but hinted at an emerging link between the way boys were thinking about the purpose of reading and their feelings towards it. This in turn appeared to be influenced by the boys' educational settings.

There were other interesting but less emphatic between-group differences. In all only three children mentioned bed-time as a reason for reading. This was not surprising given that none of the photographic stimuli directly represented this reading context. What was interesting was that all three references were made by Nursery class children. Data collected a year later suggested that the need to learn how to read gradually supplanted parental reading with child's reading, in its wake, affecting traditional bedtime stories. This data at age five hinted that this process might have begun to take place. There was insufficient data to shed more light on this specific development.

Other ideas about the functions of reading were expressed by a few boys in both groups. They too indicated the emergence of dimensions defined in previous research

with older children. Half a dozen boys mentioned boredom as a reason for reading. One boy in each group referred to reading in order to obtain specific information "he wanted to know something from the book" [Brian (R)]. Finally there were two children who saw reading as comforting, suggesting the later 'escapist' function of reading [Neil (N)] [Peter (N)].

8.9.1. A functional perspective: summary

The analysis of data indicated that by the age of five, boys' ideas about the function of reading have begun to emerge quite clearly . They matched closely the dimensions identified and defined in previous research with older children (see section 4.5) with the most prevalent dimension at this stage being 'enjoyment'.

The data also suggested a more pronounced focus on the 'utilitarian-school' dimension (Bunbury, 1995) among boys of the Reception class group. Boys in this group were aware of both parental and school demands on them to learn to read. These demands had for some become an important purpose of reading activity, at times placed side by side with 'enjoyment' but on occasion, also taking its place.

8.10. The role of parents, peer group and teachers as viewed at age five

Boys' concepts about the wider purposes of reading were also reflected in the way they interacted with others in reading activities. These interactions guided or perhaps were sometimes guided by, their perceptions of the role of others. Parents, peer group, and teachers embodied a variety of functions.

A number of the photographic stimuli offered the boys opportunities to speak about parent-child interaction around reading. These interactions fell into the categories of parent (mother or father) reading to child, child reading to parent or a joint reading activity where the reader was not specified. In response to these stimuli, only two boys stated that there was no reading interaction between themselves and a parent. One commented emphatically, "They don't read to me" [Rajiv (R)] and when asked about reading to the parent replied "I can't read".

Usually mothers and to a less extent fathers, were assigned the role of either reading to the child or of listening. Sometimes it was a joint activity where the reader as not specified: "he's reading a book with his mummy" [Oscar (N)]. Several children simply described such routines but did not explain them, such as the scene of a mother reading while the child turned the pages. But, both the Nursery and Reception class groups included boys who saw the reading activity as one done for enjoyment. The child wanted a story [Graham (R)] or "a mummy is reading to *his* [sic) little boy.... because they like reading" [Simon (N)]. "there's a little girl sitting with her dad reading a book....because I think they like books" [Dan (N)]. Elsewhere mother took on the listening role for the same reason "he's reading a book to his mum...because he wanted to" [Derrick (N)].

The contrast between the two groups lay not in the routines themselves but in the highly didactic emphasis placed on these reading sessions by the boys from the Reception class group. In fact all references to the didactic dimension of reading came from boys who were in this group: "Mummy has to look at the book to see if it's the right word" [Harry (R)]; "A mummy with all the children...telling them how to read" [Henry (R)]; the little girl is reading to her mum because "I have to learn to read" [Joel (R)]; "he reads the story and he helps me" [Gabriel (R)]. Boys in the Reception class were also the only ones to associate both compulsory reading and school reading with parents: "She's making him do reading"; "His dad was telling him to read it and I don't like reading books" [Arnold (R)]; "Cos they have to take them home and read them to their mum" [Matthew (R)]. Two of these boys assumed that the book being shared by parent and child was a 'school book'. These examples captured the beginning of a change in the role of parents as a result of their boys entering school. The data complemented the findings of Spreadbury's study cited in the literature review, (Spreadbury, 1995) which had identified a change in the nature of parent-child interaction around reading during the transition to school. Spreadbury suggested children became more passive. Data from this study noted both a change in the tone of the interaction brought about by its now obligatory nature and a restriction in the boundaries of the role played by parents and their boys. The responsibility for reading

was being transferred away from the parent, who, responding to school demands, became concerned with making their child an independent reader.

The same differences did not govern peer group interaction with books. Most children thought of book sharing simply as an activity that friends might choose to do together, "Because they're friends I suppose" [William (R)].Several children concentrated more on the sharing than the reading, "Might be because they were playing with each other and both wanted it" [Darryl (R)]. Whereas the concept of help was associated with adult-child reading, it only appeared once across the entire sample in relation to reading with peer group. A boy in the Reception suggested that by reading together "you can help each other to make the right word up" [William (R)].

The didactic element of sharing stories which characterized the perception of the parental role among boys in the Reception class group, was also manifest in the way the two groups perceived the role of teachers and the purpose of various school-related reading routines. Teacher 'story time' was a routine familiar to both groups and widely established as an end of the day activity. For boys in the Nursery class group story time was the predominant activity associated with teachers at school. Almost half of the children talked about the routine and saw it as a part of their Nursery school day: "Their teacher is reading a story to them. They have to sit down before they read the story. They have to listen and look.... we have them in the afternoon"[Billy (N)]. "cos teachers read stories at school" [Neil (N)], as one child explained "cos children can't read them"[Peter (N)].

For many of the boys the teacher read stories because it was a particular time of day: "because it's going home time" suggested one boy [Lawrence (N)], "group time" suggested another [Neil (N)]. In trying to explain this story time routine only two children mentioned 'enjoyment' as a possible rationale, "cos they want to" [Rob (N)], "because they like it" [Rowan (N)].

Boys from the Reception class group had slightly different explanations of story time. None of the children accepted it just as a routine although this was mentioned as one reason, "because it's nearly going home time" [Benjamin (R)]. Instead it seemed to

have become a routine associated with work. Two boys described it as a stimulus for further class work: "then the circle group can draw a picture" [Benjamin (R)]. "Cos in my class after we've done a story the work has got a little bit of the picture in it and you have to do the work about it" [Jonathan (R)]. It had acquired a compulsory dimension, "cos they (the teachers) say so" [Frank (R)] and in one case story time was a purely didactic exercise "to learn how to read" [Charles (R)]. Enjoyment featured little again and seemed to relate more to the teachers than the pupils as in this exchange:

"*Why do you think teachers read stories?*"

"Just to have a little bit of fun" [William(R)].

The teacher-pupil interactions described by the Nursery boys were almost exclusively concerned with story time but included some other situations. One boy thought that the teacher was concerned with telling children how to look after books "you can play at the books but don't break them" [Dan (N)] and two boys thought the teacher was "helping" the children to read (Billy, Dennis). A few children from both groups mentioned reading as a compulsory activity, giving as an explanation "the teacher told them to read the book" [Boris (N)].

Reception class boys included a wider range of school settings and were considerably more concerned with the process of learning how to read than Nursery class boys. In fact the use of the word "learn" appears only in the transcripts of this group of boys as does the notion of reading correctly. "She's teaching the children how to read books" [Jed (R)]; "If they get stuck the teacher helps them. She tells the words if we get them wrong" [Benjamin (R)]; "she's looking if they're getting the words right" [Arnold (R)]. In contrast a Nursery group boy had comfortably relegated the task of learning to read to the future. His assertion, "I'm not in Year One", suggested that the Nursery environment did not demand him to learn to read.

8.10.1. Parents and teachers as mediators of resources and opportunities

The theoretical framework of this analysis placed parental and teacher roles as spanning the cognitive and behavioural dimensions of reading attitude (figure 8.2.). The cognitive dimension of attitude was implied in the way boys perceived the function of these roles. The analysis of data illustrated the growth of a triangular relationship between school, child and home. School-led routines affected the way the boys perceived the teacher and parental role and interpreted a variety of reading activities. A number of examples illustrated the strengthening school influence within the Reception class setting as compared to the Nursery class setting.

The behavioural dimension of reading attitude can be seen as a ramification of the parental and teacher roles. In Weinberger's terminology (Weinberger, 1996) parental influence was felt through the resources and opportunities they provided. This analysis sought to widen this uni-directional model by viewing boys' encounters with books in the context of their educational setting and as mediated by their parents. For the purpose of this analysis the behavioural dimension of reading attitude incorporated the range and context of their reading experiences, as well as their understanding of genre.

Analysis of background data (Chapter 7) had shown a group difference between the parents of Nursery and Reception class boys in their familiarity with children's book titles. This was explained by the higher educational qualifications of some Reception class mothers. Although no quantitative measure of boys' familiarity with book titles was made, as had been done with the Parents' Title Recognition List, the transcripts did yield an interesting difference, which could not be accounted for by the same factor and may relate to classroom practice. Ten Nursery class children made no mention of any title of a children's book compared to only three Reception class children. Two children from the Nursery class described particular stories in vivid detail without being able to recall the title: "It's about a fly and a little bit of red. He hasn't got any friends and at the end he finds loads of friends and all the book lights up with the flies" [Damion (N)]. The child was clearly familiar with Eric Carle's book 'The Fireflies' but was unable to name it.

In fact, the range of books mentioned in both groups was very limited (appendix 4, section B). The references depended on boys' recall of titles rather than simply recognition and so demanded fairly intimate knowledge. Traditional tales (Goldilocks, Little Red Hen etc.) and television related books (Postman Pat, Fireman Sam) were mentioned by both groups, as were cartoons (Power Rangers, Barney, The Simpsons). Two Reception class boys recognised the Ahlberg, Happy Families series, and only two boys from each group mentioned well-known children's picture books such as 'The Very Hungry Caterpillar'. One Reception class child also mentioned 'Biff and Chip' from the Oxford Reading Tree scheme but amongst an unusually wide range of other titles. At this stage no clear association emerged between recall of titles and attitudinal scores.

Another small group difference was observed in term of acquaintance with book genre. The term 'information' book was used twice and on both occasions by Reception class children. However on exploring this further it became obvious that the term was not accompanied by a real understanding of the concept and had perhaps been introduced prematurely. One child described a book about 'how birds live' as a 'story book' while the other defined an information book as one with 'photos'. On the other hand boys in both groups were able to talk about information books without using the terminology.

In spite of their difficulty in naming book titles, almost half of the sample could name at least one comic and not surprisingly, given that comics were provided at home rather than at school, no groups differences were found in their familiarity with the genre. Again terminology was uncertain with many children referring to comics as magazines or newspapers.

No group differences were identified in boys' knowledge and experience of libraries. Sixteen of the sample made no reference to a library either in school or outside school. Twelve parents had reported not belonging to any library. The majority of boys mentioned the library as a source of books, where children go to 'get' or 'borrow' books. Four children displayed some confusion about this issue, associating the library with the purchase of books: "They're in the library....because they are

going to buy the book" [Justin (N)]. Most boys' experience was associated with school library visits. This was true of both groups. Less than ten talked about the library as a place they visited regularly outside school and not all chose their own books there: "I get a book but mummy says no" [Alex (R)]. Henry visited the library with his mother and siblings, "mum chooses the books and we choose the videos". The school context did not seem to have any influence on the way families used libraries.

Although there was no clear distinction in the range of books encountered by both groups there was evidence of the growth of a school-related conceptual difference in the way boys talked about and used books. The emphasis on reading as something to be 'learned' has been noted in the analysis of the cognitive dimension of reading. The concept of 'reading proficiency' had emerged quite clearly among some of the Reception class boys. This concept was re-iterated in the striking distinction made by Reception class boys between books in general and what they termed 'reading' or 'school' books. Only two Nursery boys used the term. Of these, one described the 'school book' as "nice....because our school books haven't got writing" [Jeffrey (N)]. The other talked about the books he took home as "some learning book, where you have to learn to read....I read them myself" [Boris (N)].

The concept was considerably more widespread among the boys in Reception class. Although still only a minority of boys in the Reception class group employed the term, (six boys made specific reference to it), these boys had developed some well-defined associations. For some it had already imposed a barrier on what they felt able to read, "I can only read reading books" [Alex (R)] "I can't read, only the school books" [Matthew (R)]. For others the reading seemed to be dominated by a repetitive routine which seemed to assume its own purpose. Reading was somehow a well-defined ladder of progression which entailed moving from one book to the next. "They have to take them home and read them to their mum and then read them to their teacher and change them" [Matthew (R)], "Read them and then get another one once you've read it" [Frank (R)]. One child stated that only his "reading book" came home, "We read them to Miss S and then we read them at home" [Arnold (R)].

The reading book concept encapsulated the emerging influence of school over home. School was both providing reading material and guiding reading routines to which boys and parents attached increasing importance. A year later the reading book dominated reading routines in the home becoming the main reading-related link between school and home. Inadvertently it had begun to embed in boys' minds a concept of reading as a rigid and often laborious sequence of progression. This transparent sequence highlighted the success or failure of boys' reading development, in Moss's words cited earlier, making "proficiency judgements highly visible".

8.11. Implications of findings for the influence of early educational settings on the development of boys' reading attitudes

Employing a tri-partite theoretical framework through the three constituent components of affect, cognition and behaviour, the qualitative analysis explored boys' reading attitude just prior to entering Year One. Data drawn from this sample of five-year-old boys illustrated reading attitude at an emergent stage, offering an unusual insight into its construction and drawing attention to some of its formative influences.

The quantitative analysis had pointed to a markedly broad range of attitudes towards reading as measured on a scale of scores from negative to positive. The qualitative methodology provided a descriptive commentary, which helped to clarify the meaning of these attitudinal scores and indicated the potential source of some of them.

Data suggested that the educational environment in which the boys found themselves had begun to have an impact on their reading attitudes. A number of boys in the Reception class group were developing reading-relating concepts which were rarely paralleled among the Nursery class boys. Moss described this as 'proficiency reading' where "reading as an end in itself is the main focus" (Moss, 1999 p.510). The data reflected two defining characteristics of 'proficiency reading':

i The importance attached to competence in reading alone and unaided

ii The official judgements about competence made on the basis of these literacy encounters

This was reflected in the way they talked about books and the function of reading, as well as the way they perceived the role of others in reading activities. The didactic perspective of the Reception class boys was reflected in the 'teaching role' ascribed to both parents and teachers. The data seemed to confirm Moss's findings about the "strength of the proficiency framing round reading in school" (Moss, 1999 p.518). Moss described this as "unexpected". In fact the boys' data analysed in this study, suggest it is a framework established very early on in the schooling system and dominates boys' reading experiences far earlier than the seven to nine age group of Moss's study.

This over-riding concern with reading proficiency would seem to stem from the dominating influence of the Key Stage One literacy curriculum, and the targets embodied in the SATs at age seven. In the Reception class setting the concern was shared by both parents and teachers in a reciprocal but uneven relationship. Interviews with parents had shown that their reading routines and expectations were heavily influenced by the school setting. Data from the boys themselves lent this support. In their perception the roles of each were very similar. This contrasted with both the Nursery class boys and their parents. Boys in this group did not perceive their parents as teachers and parents, in turn, were less acutely concerned with reading proficiency.

The school environment influenced attitudinal outcomes through two routes. The first acted directly between teacher and child through the demands of the school curriculum which guided teacher activities and expectations. Both parental and child data indicated a qualitative and substantial difference in the demands between Reception and Nursery class settings. This was not surprising: the latter still an independent unit worked in a more constrained time framework and could remain entrenched in the objectives of the Foundation Stage. The former, part of 'main school' was clearly influenced and came under pressure to work towards the more formal targets of Years One and Two.

The second route of influence lay through the parents, themselves influenced by the school setting. The importance of family influence on children's reading development has been widely explored and this is undisputed. Moss found that boys were more

dependent on these family influences than girls, "Girls can get to be fully committed readers via their peers and via school.....boys don't seem to take this route" (Moss, 1999a p.4) . Less well researched is the influence of school on parental contribution to literacy development. This study has put forward some evidence to suggest that the commencement of 'formal school' is potentially an inhibiting factor. Commitment by parents to teaching or practising reading with their children would seem to substitute reading to children which takes place widely with younger children. There is an inherent danger that by focussing on proficiency parents restrict their boys' access to the written word and indirectly perhaps curtail the development of boys as motivated readers. Data from parents and children hints at these trends which deserve further research.

This data has highlighted some important differences between the educational settings of the Nursery and Reception class groups and their influences on reading attitude outcomes. These differences of course account only partially for the development of the range of reading attitudes observed in this sample. Although Nursery boys had little experience of reading for proficiency they did not all express positive attitudes towards reading and few expressed a view of reading in school as a 'fun' activity. In both settings reading remained firmly entrenched in daily routines, the purposes of which were not clear to most of the sample. Few also expressed an intimate knowledge of children's books or excitement about a favourite book. In this sense the analysis does not suggest that the Nursery environment was offering a better literacy environment for the boys in this sample. These young boys' observations have important implications for teachers and parents in both settings. Most importantly they emphasise the importance of remaining aware of attitudinal developments as an intrinsic part of children's progress in literacy. This awareness is harnessed to the role that both teachers and parents play and are perceived, by children, to play, in the wide range of reading activities encountered at home and at school.

CHAPTER 9

AN ASSESSMENT OF READING ATTITUDE AT THE END OF YEAR ONE

The study monitored the development and changes in boys' reading development focusing, as before, on attitude toward reading. The research examined the changes in the sample as a whole, to ascertain and monitor any apparent overall trends in attitudinal development and to see whether changes were associated with the type of early school or pre-school experience, which had immediately preceded entry to Year One.

9.1. The sample: Summer Term, Year One (Time 2)

Data was collected for two cohorts of boys aged between five years eight months and six years, in their final term of Year One. The boys were all seen twice and data was collected from 59 of the original 60 boys. Boys from the Nursery group had almost completed their first year of formal schooling. By now, the Reception class group had experienced between one and three terms more schooling. The literacy hour was operational in all of the schools, so that their experience of learning literacy in Year One was quite uniform.

9.2. The data

Assessment of boys' attitude toward reading was made employing both the quantitative and qualitative methodologies used previously. The PRAI was repeated and the Reading Self-Concept Scale (Chapman & Tunmer, 1993) was also used. This scale consists of 30 items and reflects three sub-components of reading self-concept: difficulty with reading, competence in reading and attitude towards reading. Both instruments were administered individually.

No formal reading test was given to the boys although the Phonological Awareness Test, PAT, (Muter et al., 1997) was repeated. This was partly a reflection of the focus

of the study on reading attitude rather than reading skill. It was also important to avoid any sense of pressure on the boys. This might have impaired their rapport with the researcher and hindered efforts to explore the attitudinal dimension of reading. Results of the PAT scores were positively skewed reflecting a ceiling effect, which would be expected in a population of boys aged approximately six. The test scores were discarded in the analysis but are recorded in appendix 5, section A.

Further data was collected through a recorded interview with the boys and a parental questionnaire. The latter is examined separately.

9.3. Reading attitude scores: whole sample data

9.3.1. PRAI

The PRAI was designed to measure children's attitude to reading in a number of different contexts. These contexts were reflected in a statistical analysis of the individual items on this scale. These are presented in Appendix 5, section B, table A.5.1. Four out of five of the items with the lowest means represented situations where children were reading on their own. These items ranged from a minimum 1.88 (item nine) to a maximum of 2.05 (item 16). The two highest means (2.46 and 2.54) represented respectively a 'reading together' situation, two boys sharing a book (item six) and the reading of well-illustrated non-fiction books (item 14). This was followed closely by three items which illustrated a child reading together with an adult (items 17 and 11) and two children sharing a book (item 8).

Total scores of the PRAI showed a normal distribution and ranged from a minimum of 25 to a maximum of 45 (figure 9.1).

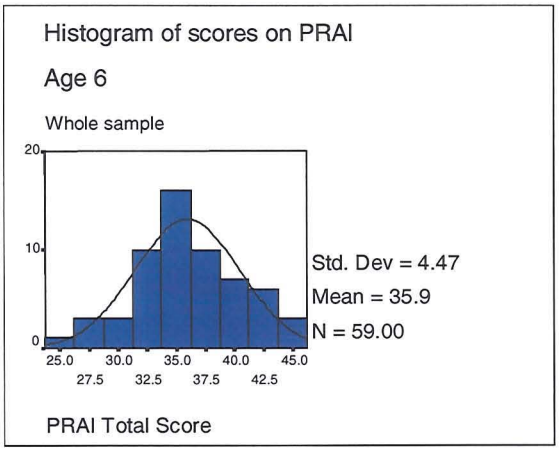

Figure 9.1 Histogram of scores on PRAI (whole sample, age six)

9.3.2. RSCS

The RSCS was designed to measure different dimensions of reading self-concept. The correlations in table 9.1 (below) confirmed these dimensions. All three dimensions correlated significantly although attitude correlated less highly with both difficulty and competence than these two dimensions do with each other. Attitude correlated more highly with competence than with difficulty.

Correlations

		Prai Total Score	Reading Self Concept Scale Total Score	RSCS Difficulty with Reading	Reading Self Concept Scale Competence in Reading	Reading Self Concept Scale Attitude Towards Reading
Prai Total Score	Pearson Correlation	1.00	.41**	.31*	.41**	.34**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.00	.02	.00	.01
	N	59.00	59.00	59.00	59.00	59.00
Reading Self Concept Scale Total Score	Pearson Correlation	.41**	1.00	.82**	.88**	.82**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.00	.	.00	.00	.00
	N	59.00	59.00	59.00	59.00	59.00
RSCS Difficulty with Reading	Pearson Correlation	.31*	.82**	1.00	.64**	.43**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.02	.00	.	.00	.00
	N	59.00	59.00	59.00	59.00	59.00
Reading Self Concept Scale Competence in Reading	Pearson Correlation	.41**	.88**	.64**	1.00	.59**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.00	.00	.00	.	.00
	N	59.00	59.00	59.00	59.00	59.00
Reading Self Concept Scale Attitude Towards Reading	Pearson Correlation	.34**	.82**	.43**	.59**	1.00
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.01	.00	.00	.00	.
	N	59.00	59.00	59.00	59.00	59.00

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Table 9.1 Relationship between RSCS and PRAI total scores and sub-scales of RSCS

Total scores for the RSCS showed a normal distribution (figure 9.2), ranging from a minimum of 46 to a maximum of 149. The RSCS sub-scale attitude remained positively skewed (figure 9.3), showing a similar distribution to the PRAS scores a year earlier although these two attitudinal scores showed no significant relationship.

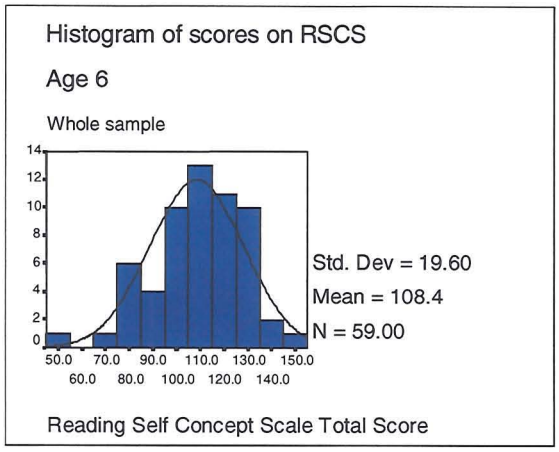

Figure 9.2 Histogram of scores on RSCS (whole sample, age six)

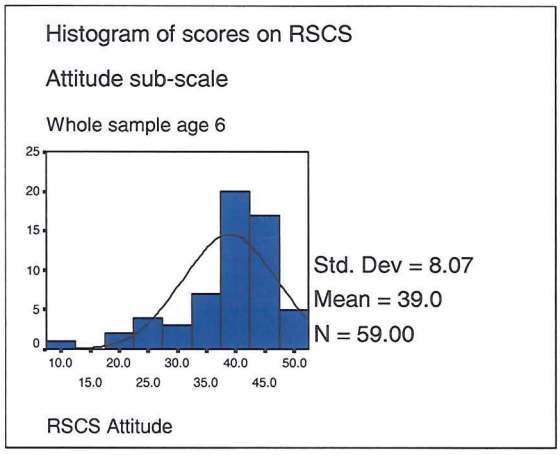

Figure 9.3 Histogram of scores on RSCS attitude sub-scale (whole sample, age six)

The RSCS difficulty sub-scale (figure 9.4) showed a clear bi-modal distribution indicating the emergence of two distinct groups of boys with defined ideas about the difficulty of reading. The distribution of the RSCS competence sub-scale (figure 9.5) fell within the range of a normal distribution (appendix 5, Table 5.2) but tended toward a distribution similar to the difficulty sub-scale.

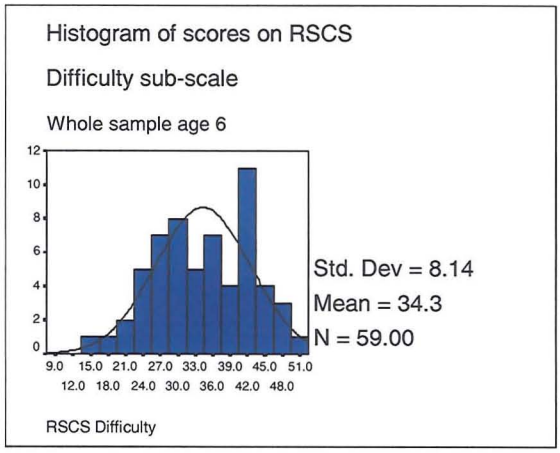

Figure 9.4 Histogram of scores on RSCS difficulty sub-scale (whole sample, age six)

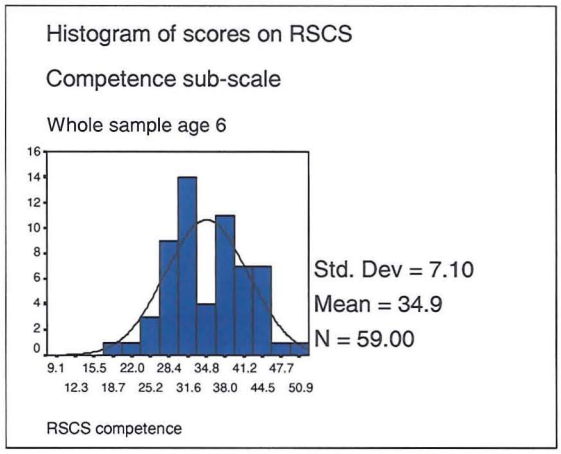

Figure 9.5 Histogram of scores on RSCS competence sub-scale (whole sample, age 6)

Total scores of the PRAI and RSCS correlated significantly with each other ($r= 0.41$ $p<0.01$) (figures 9.6). The PRAI also had a small but significant correlation with the RSCS attitude sub-scale (figure 9.7). This correlation would suggest that the two instruments are measuring a single underlying attitudinal construct. Prior to entry to Year One significant correlations were noted between the PRAI and PRAS. Both these correlations strengthen the content validity of the PRAI.

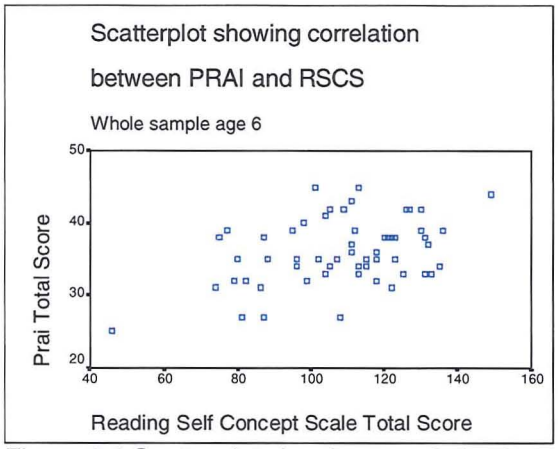

Figure 9.6 Scatterplot showing correlation between PRAI and RSCS (whole sample, age 6)

(r=0.41 p <0.01)

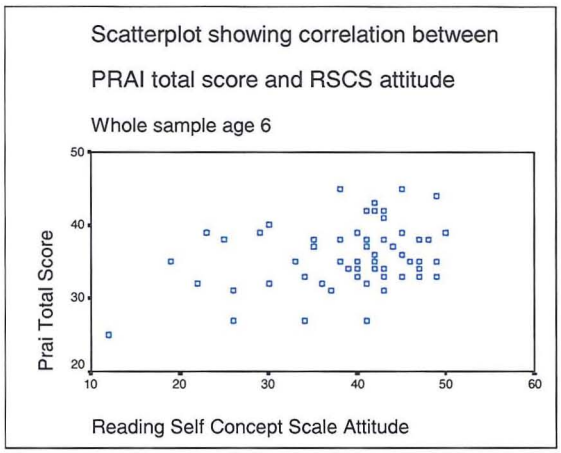

Figure 9.7 Scatterplot showing correlation between PRAI and RSCS attitude sub-scale (whole sample, age 6)
(r=0.34 p<0.01)

9.4. Changes in reading attitude over time

The PRAI had been designed so as to enable comparison of children's attitude to reading over time. This single measure confirmed that the boys' attitude to reading between the ages of five and six was quite volatile. There was a small correlation between scores at Time 1 and Time 2, which just failed to reach significance (r=0.25 p<0.056). However, a composite score of attitude consisting of the z scores of both attitudinal instruments at Times One and Two, did show a significant correlation (r=0.28 p<0.04).

9.5. A comparison of reading attitude between boys with Reception and Nursery class experience

Between-group comparisons were made on all measurements. PRAI scores did not show any between group differences on total score. As illustrated in figure 9.8 the distribution of scores in both groups was almost identical and there were no outliers.

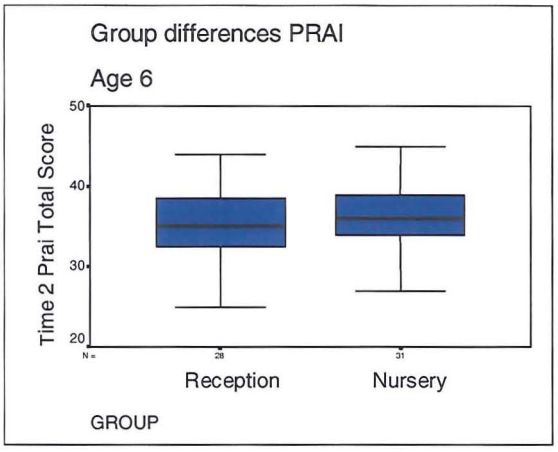

Figure 9.8 Boxplot showing group differences on PRAI total scores

A comparison of individual items yielded significant differences on just two items. Reception class boys held more negative attitude toward drawing and art work (item 1) and independent reading (item 5) (Appendix 5, section C, table A.5.3). However given the unreliability of individual items, no conclusion can be drawn from these differences on their own.

Scores on the RSCS did yield some notable differences. Although the mean for the Nursery group was only slightly higher than for the Reception class (figure 9.9), the distributions of the two groups are quite different. Scores among Reception class boys had a lower negative range than among Nursery class boys. The lowest quartile of the Nursery group was almost equivalent to the lowest scores of the middle 50% in the Reception class group. This held true for all three sub-scales of the RSCS (see figures 9.10 - 9.12).

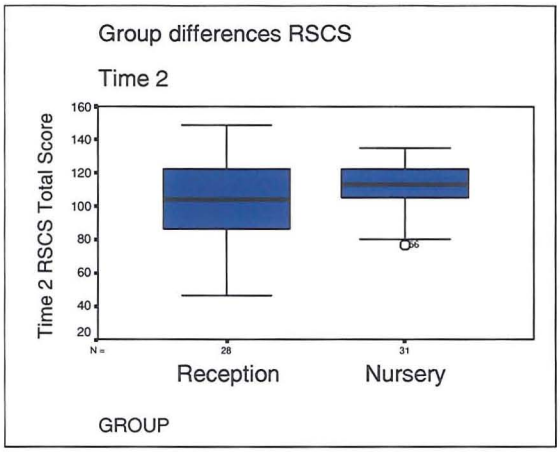

Figure 9.9 Boxplot showing group differences on RSCS total score

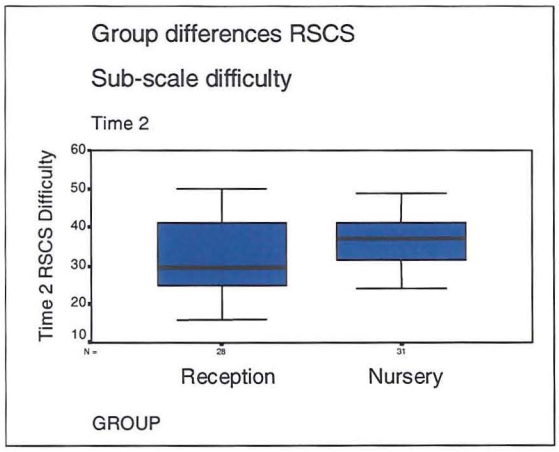

Figure 9.10 Boxplot showing group differences on RSCS difficulty sub-scale

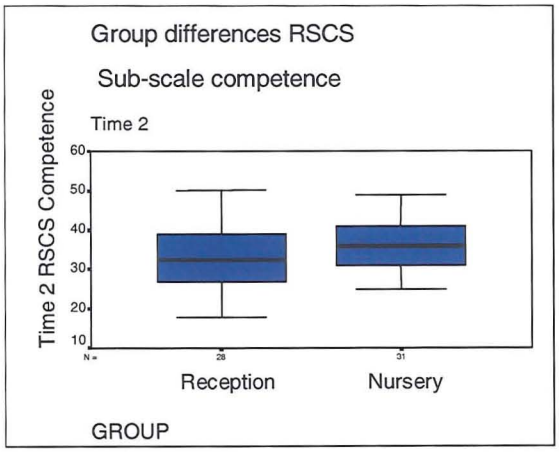

Figure 9.11 Boxplot showing group differences on RSCS competence sub-scale

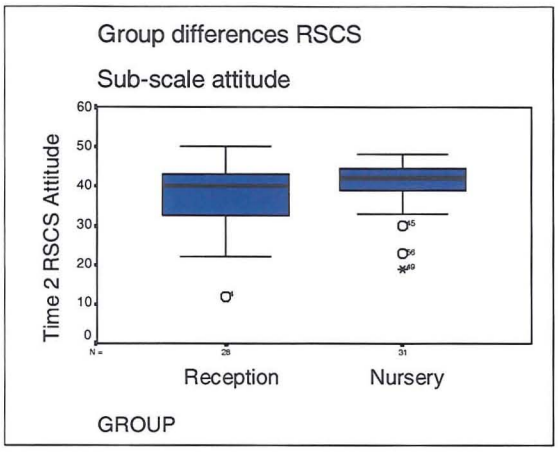

Figure 9.12 Boxplot showing group differences on RSCS attitude sub-scale

T tests were conducted on the RSCS total scores and the two sub-scales competence and difficulty. Results are presented tables 9.2 and 9.3. Given the skewed distribution of the attitude sub-scale, a non-parametric test was applied (tables 9.4 and 9.5). While for the Nursery class group, scores were higher on all four tests, the difference only attained a significant level for the difficulty sub-scale.

Group Statistics

	GROUP	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Reading Self Concept Scale Total Score	Reception	28	104.07	23.02	4.35
	Nursery	31	112.32	15.25	2.74
RSCS Difficulty with Reading	Reception	28	32.11	9.41	1.78
	Nursery	31	36.29	6.32	1.14
Reading Self Concept Scale Competence in	Reception	28	33.89	7.89	1.49
	Nursery	31	35.84	6.29	1.13

Table 9.2 Comparison of RSCS and its sub-scales 'difficulty' and 'competence' mean scores in Reception and Nursery class groups at age six

Independent Samples Test

		t-test for Equality of Means		
		t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Reading Self Concept Scale Total Score	Equal variances assumed	-1.64	57.00	.11
	Equal variances not assumed	-1.61	46.13	.12
RSCS Difficulty with Reading	Equal variances assumed	-2.02	57.00	.05
	Equal variances not assumed	-1.98	46.55	.05
Reading Self Concept Scale Competence in Reading	Equal variances assumed	-1.05	57.00	.30
	Equal variances not assumed	-1.04	51.60	.30

Table 9.3 T test comparing scores of Reception and Nursery class groups on RSCS and its sub-scales 'difficulty' and 'competence'

Ranks

	GROUP	N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks
Time 2 Reading Self Concept Scale Attitude Towards Reading	Reception	28	27.18	761.00
	Nursery	31	32.55	1009.00
	Total	59		

Table 9.4 Comparison of RSCS sub-scale attitude mean scores in Reception and Nursery class groups at age six

Test Statistics[a]

	Time 2 Reading Self Concept Scale Attitude Towards Reading
Mann-Whitney U	355.000
Wilcoxon W	761.000
Z	-1.202
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	.229

a. Grouping Variable: GROUP

Table 9.5 Reception and Nursery class group comparison RSCS sub-scale attitude: Non Parametric Mann-Whitney test

Given the known difference in home literacy measures identified at Time One, a sub-sample group comparison was carried out which excluded mothers with degree or higher qualifications. An independent sample t test confirmed that clear group differences had emerged. Boys in Reception class perceived reading to be more difficult ($p<0.002$) and seemed to feel less competent at it ($p<0.06$). There was a significant difference between Nursery and Reception class boys in reading self-concept as measured on the RSCS total score ($t = 2.77$ $p<0.008$).

9.6. Discussion of results

Irrespective of initial experiences at school, the attitudinal scores of this sample of summer-born boy in their final term of Year One suggested that a considerable proportion of boys were failing to develop positive ideas about reading, particularly in the area of self-concept. The results suggest that about 50% of the sample perceived reading as a difficult task and had fairly low estimations of their own competence. These concepts have not necessarily been translated into negative attitudes in the affective dimension (see fig.8.2 p.143). The reading self-concept attitude sub-scale suggested that the majority of boys had retained positive feelings towards reading as an activity. Results on the PRAI indicated that while general feelings remained positive, specific reading situations engendered negative attitudes. Analysis of the individual items on the PRAI for instance, pointed to a preference for shared reading, whether with an adult or another child. Scenes of children reading independently evoked less positive attitudes.

Scores on the PRAI and RSCS were standardised and mean total scores were calculated. Boys within the lowest 15% of the range were defined as those holding negative attitudes. Out of eight boys in this group, six had belonged to Reception classes (table 9.6).

STANDARDIZED SCORE	RECEPTION BOY	NURSERY BOY
-2.82	Alex	
-1.70	Charles	
-1.54		Dan
-1.03	Ricki	
-1.19	Zak	
-1.13	Adam	
-1.12	Rajiv	
-1.01		Jack

Alex and Dan were in negative attitude group prior to entry to Year One

Table 9.6 Group distribution of boys, aged six, with negative reading attitudes

It was interesting to note that after a common Year One, clear group differences had emerged in reading self-concept. Boys who had experienced more terms in school, through the Reception class, felt that reading was more difficult and felt that they were less competent than those who had commenced formal school at the statutory age. A possible explanation for this finding may lie in the fact that boys with Reception class experience were expected to achieve more highly than their counterparts from Nursery, both by parents and teachers. Alternatively, they may have had more opportunity to encounter problems and, possibly, failure over those terms in Reception class. These experiences would have contributed to the development of more negative reading self-concepts. Whatever the reasons, the implications of these findings are considerable and would challenge the prevalent practice of the introduction of formal reading instruction at such an early stage.

As at Time 1, these scores served as an indicator of trends in reading attitude. These scores were corroborated and clarified by the analysis of conversational interviews held with children. This analysis is presented in the following section.

9.7. Understanding boys' attitude toward reading

The rationale and methodology for the exploration of boys' attitudes toward reading were presented in detail in chapter 8. This chapter's analysis has employed the same

methodology and model of reading attitude described there, but has been selective in its presentation, by focussing on the most prominent new developments evident in the data. The analysis of each of the three attitudinal domains (Figure 8.2) has been situated in the context of school and home environments of these Year One boys.

9.8. The affective dimension of reading at the end of Year One

Standardised scores on the PRAI and the RSCS identified those boys at either end of the affective dimension on the attitudinal spectrum (tables 9.6 and 9.7).

STANDARDIZED SCORE	RECEPTION BOY	NURSERY BOY
0.83		Alan
0.86	Kenny	
0.89		Collin
1.05	William	
1.13		Damion, Derrick
1.15		Dennis
1.23	Martin	
1.94	Percy	

Collin was in positive attitude group prior to entry to Year One
Dennis, Damion, Alan, transcripts not available

Table 9.7 Group distribution of boys, aged six, with positive reading attitudes

This spectrum was viewed as a continuum and the expression of both positive and negative attitudes was of course not confined to these small groups. As extremes, the scores were useful indicators for identifying the types of concepts by which attitudinal dimension were shaped.

As at Time 1, expressions of positive attitudes were less precisely defined than negative attitudes. However, unlike a year earlier, boys within the very positive

attitude group had for the most part identified particular favourites in reading matter and had substantial resources in terms of books. Percy and William were mainly interested in information books: "I like facts" [William (R)]. Derrick (N) on the other hand had "Lots and lots" of popular favourites: "I've got about eleven Postman Pat ones and I've got all the Mr Men ones". Reading scores taken a year later showed that this positive attitude group included boys at opposite ends of the achievement scale. Clearly, the content of reading prevailed over the process and these boys had found ways of enjoying reading without necessarily having become proficient in the skills. Derrick (N) commented expressly "I like when my mum reads with me". Percy talked about how he enjoyed sharing books with his friend Kenny (R), a boy who had described himself as unable to read.

Eight boys had been identified as holding very negative attitudes toward reading. As noted these were mainly boys with Reception class experience, two of whom had formed part of the lowest 15% on the attitudinal spectrum a year earlier. Alex was a striking example, his intense dislike of reading had remained undiminished: "I hate reading". Alex had described his feelings in exactly the same way while still in Reception and continued to stand out in expressing his dislike quite so vehemently. Whereas in Reception he claimed not to read with his parents, by the end of Year One, he had developed a strong dislike for this activity. He saw it as pointless, unable to find a good explanation of why his father asked him to do it: "I don't know…it's because he wants me to give the book back to the school". Reading to his mum was no easier and he claimed he had no experience of reading with his teacher either individually or in a group although he did read with other adults. His comments suggested the absence of any positive reading interactions with the adults around him. Alex found reading on his own "a little hard". Not surprisingly when shown the photograph of two boys sharing a book (item 6), he explained what was happening with the words: "so they can help you". He did not talk about sharing the book for enjoyment. While Alex's feelings remained predominantly negative, he did now express an enjoyment about specific stories read by his teacher. Whereas in Reception he had not enjoyed "sitting on the carpet", now he viewed story time as a period of relaxation. These sessions, he said, occurred only at the end of the day "because we've been very tired in the day having to do a lot of work". He mentioned 'Who

Sank the Boat?' as an example of a story he had found amusing and his re-telling reflected his familiarity with and enjoyment of it. Alex had strong likes and dislikes about his choice of books. Prior to choosing he had to ascertain: "If it's a horrible book or not" and he had a clear verdict relating to comics: "They're boring".

Of the four Nursery class boys identified as low-scoring prior to entry to Year One, only one remained so by the end of Year One. This child now made his views quite clear: Dan (N) saw reading as a compulsory homework task which his mother insisted he carried out. It made him "cross ... because when I read my book and my mum tells me to do it and then I have to do it because I don't like doing it". Just as the Reception class boys had done the previous year, boys from Nursery classes disliked the compulsory nature of their reading activities. Even boys who held positive attitudes, were aware of this. Collin (N) read to his mum and dad every evening: "cos I have to" and Jasper stated: "the library books are more better cos I don't have to read them".

The dominating influence of compulsory reading was exemplified by Arnold, who had already expressed some reservations while in Reception. Arnold did enjoy certain aspects of reading. He was more interested in comics than books because "there's fighting and there's not much fighting of *(sic)* books". But, he had responded positively to the story of Aladdin read to him by a teacher recently, which suggested that given appropriate reading material his interest could be aroused. However, his reading world had become dominated by 'reading books' and the process of learning how to read had taken precedence in his mind over reading for fun. He had a sense that learning to read was important: "Yes it is important because if you don't read someone else who don't read might have told you,: 'Can you tell me what this says?', and you couldn't". 'Reading books' have been set aside in his mind as something quite distinct: "library are bigger than reading books" and have lots of words in them. Even story time is dominated by the reading scheme. Though the photographic stimulus provided no hint of this, Arnold (R) suggested that the teacher was reading Roger Red Hat to the children and asking questions about it. "She wants the children to learn about The Village With Three Corners[7]". The compulsory element of reading was always present. Arnold (R) was still reading regularly to his mum but no mention

was made of the reverse: "I have to read them to her. I have to just try". Arnold (R) did not verbalise a reluctance to read books but there was a notable lack of enthusiasm in contrast to his keen interest in comics.

Another theme that had begun to emerge among this group of negative scoring boys but was not restricted just to them, was the concept of reading as something difficult. The scores on the sub-scale of RSCS had shown that this perception was more marked among boys from the Reception class group. Zak was a typical example. He had spent just under a year in Reception class and equated reading with school work, which he disliked, "I don't like work. I like books with colours". His main interest seemed to be cartoon/television related. In his own words, he liked 'cool' books among which he placed books about dinosaurs, sea creatures and Power Rangers. The task of learning to read was proving to be a demanding one. Like many other boys at this stage, the difficulty of the task had become a dominating feature of the way Zak viewed reading.

Dan, having entered Year One straight from Nursery, was reflecting his own and others' feelings when explaining one of the photographs: "it's quite hard to read. .... they don't want to". Even Collin (N), whose high scores placed him in the positive attitude group, distinguished two books with the words: "that one is better and that one is harder" implying that his enjoyment of reading was curtailed when the book became hard.

Charles (R) shared this view of reading, expressing his reservations about reading in connection to his own reading rather than to reading in general. He preferred to share a book because: "I like people to help me" and he tended to label books as 'easy' or 'difficult'. Learning to read was a primary objective of reading routines both in and out of school. The teacher used reading as an opportunity to assess them "telling them if they can read a book", and parents want them "to learn to read all of it". In spite of this, Charles (R) was quite well informed about reading and certainly responded to particular stories. He gave a vivid description of the Fish Who Could Wish, although interestingly it was the same book he had identified as 'special' the previous year in

[7] A reference to the reading scheme One, Two , Three and Away first published in 1984

Reception. He viewed reading as an activity that some pursued for enjoyment and certainly shared the enjoyment when listening to stories being read. The transcript also threw some doubt as to what extent Charles (R) was being offered stimulating reading matter. He had a hazy idea of the library: "they buy some books but they have to give them back". As regards his school library, he viewed it as a place in which to work rather than either a place to read or from which to borrow books. On two occasions, he mentioned reading the Bible. Once was cited in the context of a story being read by a mother to her child and once as an example of non-fiction he read himself, in fact in his own words: "the only non-fiction". Charles (R) was attending a Roman Catholic school and this emphasis was therefore not surprising.

It must be stressed that children's difficulty with reading had not necessarily become a dislike. Several children talked about reading as difficult but, nevertheless, expressed positive attitudes. This was supported by the discrepancy in scores between the RSCS sub-scales of 'attitude' and 'difficulty'. Rob (N) thought reading was "quite difficult", a factor which may have partially accounted for his low score at at the end of Year One (standardised total attitude score –0.83) He preferred to share books so as to be able to have 'help'. His reading world was certainly dominated by school reading. Books read for his teacher were described by colour rather than by title or subject, "The first books are red then yellows then blues then greens". But, despite his low scores, Rob did not hold entirely negative feelings about reading. While he disliked reading on his own, he enjoyed reading to his father: "When I get stuck he helps me".

One solution for those who encountered difficulty with reading was to find the enjoyment of books through listening to stories being read. A year earlier, Ricki's attitudinal scores had been among the highest. By the end of Year One, he had developed a distinctly negative attitude: "I don't like reading with my dad". "I like it when my mum do it but I don't like me doing it .... cos when I do it's hard to think about what it is. Last night I was thinking about what is princess and I thought it was prince". Others echoed his feelings. "I don't like reading on my own"[Richard (R)]. "It's fun ... cos she's reading it to me", commented Brian (R) while talking about his teacher.

The growing awareness of reading as a difficult process also began to generate more awareness among the boys about their own ability. Boys from both groups were judging their own and others' abilities and limitations: "I'm not that good at reading", [Darren (N)]. "If they're too small letters I can't read" [Lawrence (N)]."They're not very good at reading" [Percy (R)].

9.9. The affective dimension of reading: implications of findings at the end of Year One

Given the uniformity of experiences in Year One, it was not surprising to find the emergence of similar negative attitudes in both groups of boys. Those who had been in Nursery shared the resentment of reading imposed on them by parents identified earlier in the Reception class group. Negative interactions between parents and boys connected with reading were observed in a number of boys.

In addition, the data was characterised by the more widespread awareness of difficulty with reading and the emergence of reading concepts measured by achievement or failure. The data pointed to many cases where parents and schools were motivated primarily by the desire and pressure to ensure their children became fluent readers. The transcripts lent support to the scores on the RSCS difficulty with reading sub-scale, reflecting the growing domination of this self-concept in the reading process.

9.10. A functional perspective: boys' ideas about the purposes of reading at age six

'Enjoyment', continued to be viewed as a primary function of reading, mentioned by over half the sample. Their terminology was largely similar: "they like stories" [Ricki (R)], "they like books" [Henry (R)] "it's fun" [Rowan (N)]. One boy expressed himself more enthusiastically. Although still at the early stages of independent reading he found books exciting "because in chapter books you want to read more and more and you want to go on to another chapter book" [Bruno (N)]. However the

number of boys who made no mention of enjoyment had increased threefold and included boys from both groups.

Among boys who did not mention 'enjoyment', the most frequently cited reason for reading lay in it being a compulsory activity, "because their teacher said they had to" Frank (R), "because we have to read books at home" [Peter (N)]. For these children reading took place because it was directed by both teachers and parents and this was a view which, by the end of Year One, dominated children's thinking about the purpose of reading.

Whether or not 'enjoyment' served as a function of reading, the sample as a whole viewed reading as a compulsory activity the purpose of which was not always entirely clear. For some children the purpose had become buried in the routine itself. Particularly in the school setting, reading took place because it was set aside as 'reading time'. This could mean an allocated library session or a 'filling-in' time when the children were reading while waiting for others.

One child explained that his father made him read, (an activity he intensely disliked) so that the child could return the book to his teacher. He toyed with the idea that the problem might be solved if he could keep the book 'forever'. Another child thought that he read to his teacher so that "she can change our book" [Hideo (R)]. By reading, these children were meeting the demands of the adults around them whose motives were only partially understood, "she wants us to do work" [Amit (R)], "She wants all the homework done" [Kenny (R)]. For some, *not* reading meant negative consequences:

"She's got to read it because she won't know the words so she won't be able to read it to her teacher and then the teacher will be angry" [Bruno (N)]; "Because if you don't read your reading book ... you have to take it back and read it again". [Jeremy (N)]. One child was motivated by the idea that he would miss playtime were he to take too long over his reading [Dominic (N)]. In contrast, two children mentioned positive consequences of reading. At school you might win "a certificate or a merit"

[Hideo (R)], while at home one mother "always listens good and sometimes gives me a sweet" [Jed (R)].

Among the sample, many of the children had come to recognize the purpose of the task as a pedagogical one. "She makes us learn books" [Hideo (R)], and "to learn the words" was a favourite phrase. Learning the technique of reading so much dominated some children's thoughts that even comics were read with this in mind, "so he can learn to read" [Lawrence (N)].

A more long-term or broader objective was very rare. Terry and Frank were the only boys do have express this perspective: "It's important that you can read when you are grown-up" [Frank (R)].

Since reading was viewed as a compulsory task, its purpose frequently become bound up more in the person demanding the activity, than in the activity itself. Nevertheless, while only one Reception class child had mentioned book content as a motivation to read, several children now did so, citing a range of reasons for reading. Boys from both groups were motivated by humour or the excitement of the story. Several boys had also learned the use of books as a source of information although interestingly, this applied only to the boys with Nursery class experience.

Of the changes that had occurred by the end of Year One, the most emphatic was the increasing concern with learning to read. The majority now viewed the task of learning how to read as a primary, if not exclusive, function of reading. For this reason, many reading situations were seen by the boys to be compulsory rather than self-motivated or motivated extrinsically by either positive or negative consequences. Children's reading habits were viewed by the children themselves as highly directed by both parents and teachers, whose own values placed priority on the importance of learning how to read. This concern seemed to over-shadow the boys' developing awareness of reading as a source of pleasure and information, dominating the thoughts of parents, teachers and pupils alike.

9.11. The role of parents, peer group and teachers as viewed at age six

The photographic stimuli included a number of settings in which child and adult were sitting together sharing a book. For almost every child at least one of the photographs related to their own experiences of reading to a parent. In contrast, only about a quarter of the sample referred to a parent reading to the child. The primary role of the parent had come to be as helper in the process of learning to read. This help was described in a number of ways: "helping him out on difficult words" ; "she's trying to make him know how to put his finger under there so she is putting her finger under there"[William (R)]; "the daddy is helping her to sound it out" [Dan (N)].
Most ascribed an active role to their parents, which closely resembled that of a teacher. Dominic (N) was probably describing a familiar situation when he said that the boy did not want to read the story, (it was hard), and was doing so under parental pressure. The father "wants him to learn the words". Included in this parent/teacher role was the monitoring of reading, "she checks if he does it right or not" [Arthur (R)] and the more passive role of listening to children read, "she wants to hear me read" [Percy (R)]. Only very few children associated this activity with enjoyment, as one child said "she likes reading with her kid" [Martin (R)] and another "I like reading to him (dad)" [Rob (N)].

Reading to a parent was largely associated with the 'reading book', a concept that had begun to emerge in some boys a year earlier but was now familiar to the whole sample. Since the process of learning to read was the major concern, it was not surprising to find that most children assumed that parent-child interaction with a book represented a reading practice time.

The following sort of association was common: "The boy is reading a story...because it must be his reading book" [Darren (N)]; "he's reading to his mum because that may be a school book and you know you have to go home and read it to your mum and dad" [Jonathan (R)]. A response to the query of why a boy was reading to his mother came as: " Cos it's a school book" [Frank (R)].

The reading book had come to be seen as a separate genre. One child even contrasted 'reading books' with fiction, the latter being what the teacher reads to the children, the former, books from which you learn to read. Another child compared reading books to library books, suggesting "library books are bigger than reading books" [Arnold (R)], while one boy felt that "library books are more better because I don't have to read them" [Jasper (N)]. Biff and Chip and the Magic Key stories, all part of the Oxford Reading Tree scheme, were widely mentioned. In fact, one child talked about the Oxford Reading Tree as his favourite sort of book. But, characteristically, the boys were more aware of stages and progression within the scheme than of content. "You read them and then you get another one once you've read it" [Frank (R)]; "I read Oxford Reading Tree and I am on Gold books" [Jasper (N)]. One child knew exactly which stage each child in his reading group was on, identifying the higher stages with the 'good reader'.

The reverse situation, that of parents reading to child, was described rather less frequently. There were a few references to bedtime stories and some children talked about their parents reading the 'hard' books [Hideo (R)] or 'the books with small letters' [Simon (N)]. However, the transcripts suggested that in the vast majority of cases the children had become the main readers, a position that many did not relish. Reading to a parent had become firmly established as a regular routine, which placed the reading book at the centre of children's experiences with books.

The concept of sharing a book with one's peer group had also changed markedly. Whereas a year previously, the interaction was described as arising out of friendship, this was now well counter-balanced by the idea of helping each other with the reading process. Children share books "so they can get a little help" [Alex (R)]; "one is good and the other isn't" [Percy (R)]. Although a good number of the boys still mentioned friendship as a reason for sharing books, an equal number now applied a similar role to their peer group as they did to their teachers and parents. They were there to support them in their efforts to learn to read, helping and teaching, "the older boys wanted to teach the younger boy how to read" [Oscar (N)].

The peer group relationship gave more evidence of the dominating influence, which the process of learning to read had on the boys in this sample. The data drawn from them showed that this was not a process confined to the classroom but affected all areas of their reading, their reading material as well as their interactions around reading. Group differences observed at Time 1 had disappeared, yielding to quite a uniform picture in which both parents and pupils were primarily concerned with the acquisition of technical skills in reading. Analysis of the data portrayed the similar way boys talked about reading within the school environment and to what extent they met with same priorities that were evident outside.

Story time routine at school was firmly entrenched: "we can't go out of school without a story" [Oscar (N)]. For most of the boys a story read by the teacher was viewed as an intrinsic part of the school day punctuating other school activities and most frequently established as the final activity of the day. The routine was sufficient explanation for most children. They are having a story "because they are going home in a minute" [Amit (R)].

A number of boys thought that the teachers were motivated by the children's enjoyment, "she thinks it's good reading a story .... because we like stories ..... all children like stories" [Rowan (N)]. It was viewed as a type of reward, "so we can have fun, because we've been very tired in the day having to do a lot of work" [Alex (R)]. In the same vein, one boy talked about the teacher choosing a book that the children would think was 'funny'.

While listening to the teacher read a story was a routine familiar to all the boys in the sample there was no equivalent routine among parents. Whereas almost every child mentioned story time with a teacher, only a small proportion of the boys talked about listening to stories read by parents. Even then, as pointed out earlier, stories read by parents were qualified as the 'hard ones' or the 'ones with small writing'. And, in other cases boys described joint reading sessions in which parent and child might read alternate pages. Certainly, the story time routine as seen in the school setting was not universally matched in the home environment, which most boys associated with having to read themselves.

Although the boys also attributed didactic motivations to the teachers, these were of a far more general nature than those associated with the parental role. One or two talked of the teacher wanting the children to 'learn the book', 'learn the stories', or 'learn the words in the story'. But, the story reading times were not viewed as a time for learning how to read and they were generally quite distinct from what the boys regarded as work.

The teaching of reading skills by teachers occurred mainly in group sessions. Given the introduction of the literacy hour in most schools at the time this data was collected, this was to be expected. In these group sessions the role was very similar to that described by the same children when talking about their parents. Teachers were seen to be 'helpers'; "she's helping them read it... by telling me the words that I don't know" [Percy (R)]; "the teacher ...helps us with the words we get stuck on" [Simon (N)]; "the teacher listens and says the words if we say it wrong" [Peter (N)]. Like parents, teachers were also there to monitor: "they have to read to their teachers to prove that they are very good readers" [Arthur (R)]; "at the end she just writes in our green books if we've done good or not" [Richard (R)].

Only a very few boys talked about teachers' use of book content for purposes other than to learn to read. Areas mentioned were the use of the index in books, the reading of fiction and non-fiction texts, the use of books to stimulate further work through pictures and writing and the discussion of 'character' in books. These more sophisticated ideas about the use of books were expressed by just a small minority within the sample.

9.12. Reading attitude at age six: summary and implications

The tri-partite model of reading attitude adopted in this study (see section 8.2.), has guided the analysis of the both the quantitative and qualitative data collected at the end of Year One. The trends that have been noted in each of these three domains have generally been common to both groups of boys, irrespective of their early years experience. There was one notable exception. Boys with Reception class experience

perceived reading to be harder than those who came from Nursery. The growth of perceived difficulty was evident across the sample and represented an important trend. The formality of Year One, together with the demands of the literacy hour and heightened expectations of pupils were probably all contributory factors. Given the young age of this sample, the trend is of some concern. The widespread 'struggle' with reading is unlikely to be conducive to attitudinal outcomes. More significantly, the data suggests that an early start intensifies the perception of reading as a difficult task.

A second growing trend was found in boys' deep concern with the didactic function of reading. Although 'enjoyment' continued to be widely recognised as a function, it had been displaced or at least joined by the idea of reading in order to learn. This dominated boys' interpretation of reading routines, and the role of others within this routine. Theirs was a very narrow perspective, where wide-ranging texts and a variety of reading situations were all subjugated to the single task of acquiring reading proficiency. In spite of much of the sample's continuing enjoyment of reading this was becoming submerged within the overwhelming concern for the acquisition of reading skills. This concern was reflected in both the quantitative scores of the RSCS and widely in the boys' transcripts. The data gave strong evidence of the impact of this concern on the affective as well as the cognitive and behavioural dimensions of reading attitude.

CHAPTER 10

AN ASSESSMENT OF READING ATTITUDES AND STANDARDS OF READING AT THE END OF KEY STAGE ONE

10.1. Data and sample at the end of Key Stage One

The final set of data was collected in the summer term of Year Two, just after the boys had completed their Key Stage One SATs. Reading standards were measured using the Neale Analysis of Reading Ability, Form 1 (Neale, 1989). Reading attitude and self concept was assessed with three different scales: the PRAI (used on each occasion of data collection), the RSCS (Chapman & Tunmer, 1993) (used at the end of Year One), and ERAS (McKenna & Kear, 1990). Interview-type data was collected from the boys as on each previous occasion.

Data was collected from 58 boys aged 6yr 9m to 7yr 3m. Two boys had moved and could not be contacted; both had been in the Reception class group. Four other boys had moved from their area but were seen in their new schools

10.2. Neale Analysis of Reading Ability: whole sample data

The Neale reading test has been widely used in educational research. The test is designed to be administered on an individual basis and measures reading accuracy, comprehension and speed. Scores for speed were not included in this study. Results are based on the scores of 57 children (practical problems interfered with collection of one set of data for this test). A summary of scores for the whole sample is included in appendix 6, section A.

Descriptive Statistics

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Neale Comprehension Raw Score	57	2.00	20.00	10.72	4.39
Neale Accuracy Raw Score	57	1.00	72.00	32.14	14.07
Valid N (listwise)	57				

Table10.1 Range and mean scores for Neale Analysis Test

Examination of the distributions of scores for the whole sample revealed a normal distribution for reading accuracy scores (See appendix 6, section A) but not for reading comprehension. These distributions are illustrated in figures 10.1. and10.2. Raw scores are used throughout the analysis, as the maximum age range of just four months did not warrant adjustment.

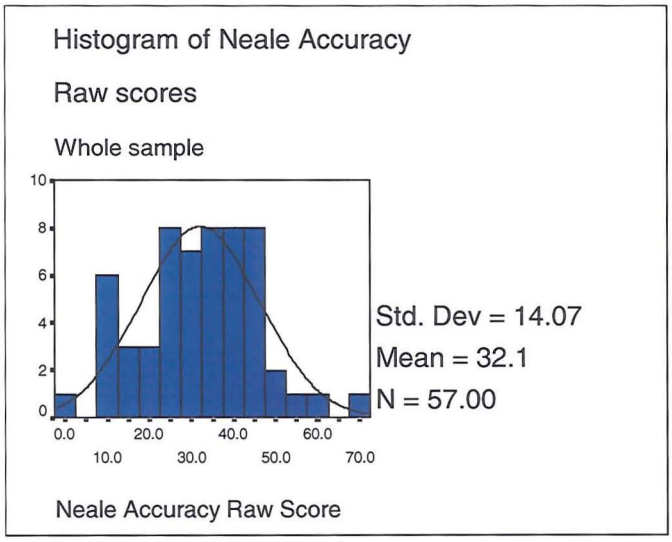

Figure10.1 Histogram of scores on Neale Analysis of Reading Ability (accuracy)

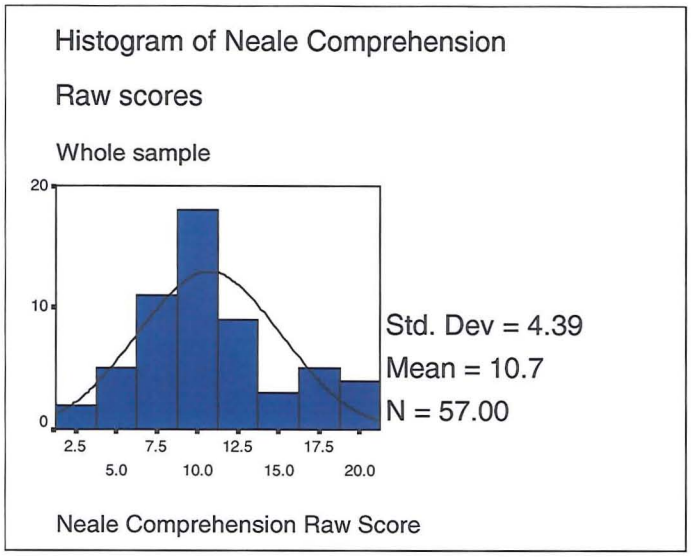

Figure10.2 Histogram of scores on Neale Analysis of Reading Ability (comprehension)

Comprehension scores were negatively skewed suggesting that technical skills had overtaken comprehension ability in a number of children. However, a Wilcoxon Signed Rank test did not indicate that accuracy scores were significantly higher than comprehension scores (appendix 6, section B).

As expected in a random sample, both sets of scores reflected a wide span of ability. In terms of reading age scores these ranged from 4yr 0m to 9yr 2m (comprehension) and <4yr to 12yr 1m (accuracy). This confirmed that children were able to score more highly on accuracy than on comprehension. The actual age range of the boys was from 6yr 9m to 7yr 3m. The mean age of the whole sample, 6yr 11m, matched a mean comprehension score of 6yr 11m and a mean accuracy score of 7yr 0 m. Given the extensive research data reported in earlier chapters, which shows boys and summer-born children lagging behind their chronological age in reading, this sample of boys was performing well.

10.3. Neale Analysis of Reading Ability: group comparisons

Boys with Reception class experience had spent up to three terms more in school than those who entered school at the statutory age, straight from Nursery. There was a

widespread belief among parents (discussed in chapter 12) that this would benefit their reading development. The greater formality and intensity of teaching in the Reception class also strengthened this belief. Comparison of the two groups of boys prior to entry to Year One had not shown any significant group differences in terms of phonological awareness although Reception class boys scored more highly on letter recognition, a difference which became more marked when mother's educational qualifications was controlled. At the end of Year Two, reading achievement among the two groups of boys was compared using the Neale Analysis of Reading Ability (figure10.3. and10.4.).

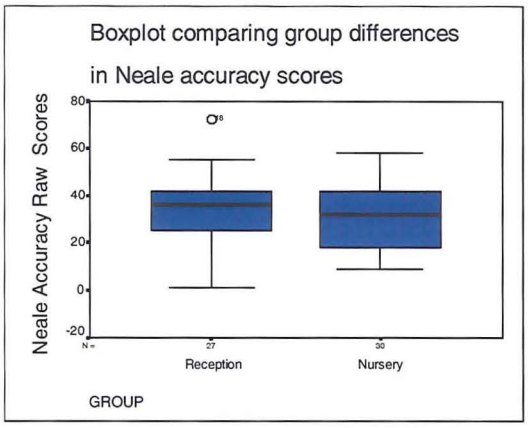

Figure 10.3 Boxplot showing group differences in Neale Analysis of Reading Ability accuracy scores

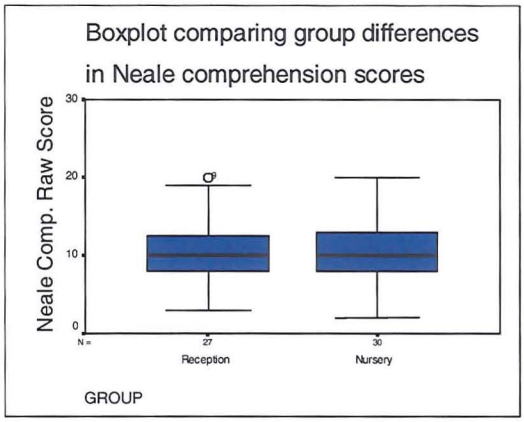

Figure 10.4 Boxplot showing group differences in Neale Analysis of Reading Ability comprehension scores

An independent sample t-test was conducted with the Neale Accuracy Scores and yielded a non-significant difference (tables 10.2 and 10.3) although the mean Reading Age for the Reception class was 7yr 3m compared to 6yr 11m for the Nursery class group. Mean score for accuracy improved very slightly when mother's educational qualifications were taken into account (mean score 34.10). This reflected a similar pattern to scores on letter recognition recorded at Time One but scores did not show a significant difference between Reception and Nursery ($p<0.31$).

Group Statistics

	GROUP	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Neale Accuracy Raw Score	Reception	27	33.78	14.56	2.80
	Nursery	30	30.67	13.70	2.50

Table10.2 Group comparison of mean scores Neale Analysis of Reading Ability (accuracy)

Independent Samples Test

		t-test for Equality of Means		
		t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Neale Accuracy Raw Score	Equal variances assumed	.83	55.00	.41
	Equal variances not assumed	.83	53.50	.41

Table10.3 T test comparing Reception and Nursery class groups on Neale Analysis of Reading Ability (accuracy)

Neale Comprehension Scores were compared using a Mann-Whitney non-parametric test as the distribution did not meet the criteria of normality with the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test even when the scores were transformed. No significant group differences were found (table 10.4). The mean Reading Age in comprehension for the Reception class group was 6 yr 11m compared to 7yr 0m for the Nursery class group.

Ranks

	GROUP	N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks
Neale Comprehension Raw Score	Reception	27	28.24	762.50
	Nursery	30	29.68	890.50
	Total	57		

Test Statistics[a]

	Neale Comprehension Raw Score
Mann-Whitney U	384.50
Wilcoxon W	762.50
Z	-.33
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	.74

a. Grouping Variable: GROUP

Table 10.4 Mann-Whitney Test (non-parametric) comparing Reception and Nursery class group on Neale Analysis of Reading Ability (comprehension)

Although the sample size was quite small, the Neale Analysis of Reading Ability test scores suggested that while Reception class may have benefited boys' reading accuracy scores (scores were higher but not at significant levels), reading comprehension levels were very similar in the two groups. Moreover the Reception class advantage identified at Time One in letter recognition was closer to significance ($p<0.06$) than reading accuracy scores at Time Three ($p< 0.31$) suggesting that some of the early advantage had been lost. A group comparison excluding the six children of highly qualified mothers identified at Times One and Two had almost no impact on scores.

10.4. The development of attitude towards reading and reading self-concept: whole sample data

The exploration of reading attitude and reading self-concept at the end of Year Two was conducted in a similar manner to that done at the end of Year One. Both the PRAI and the RSCS (Chapman & Tunmer, 1993) were repeated and in addition boys were tested with the ERAS (McKenna & Kear, 1990), an instrument which measures reading attitude in two dimensions, recreational and academic.

As illustrated in section C of appendix 6, the total scores of RSCS and ERAS showed normal distributions. The PRAI score distribution was near normal and achieved normality with a square root transformation (figures10.5 and 10.6 and table10.5)

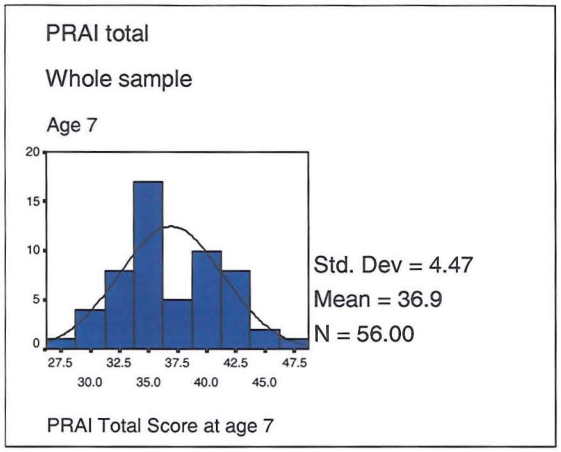

Figure10.5 Histogram of PRAI total score at age 7

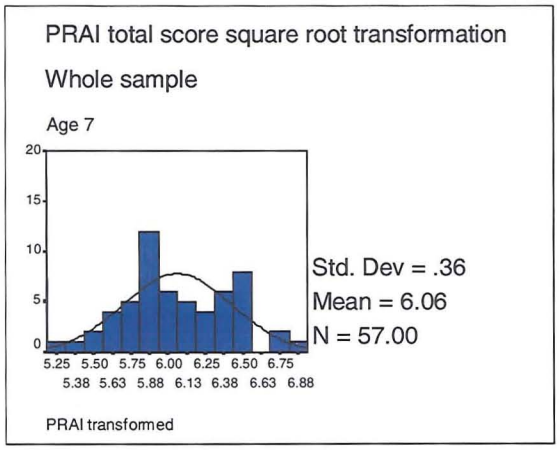

Figure10.6 Histogram of PRAI total score square root transformation

Tests of Normality

	Kolmogorov-Smirnov[a]		
	Statistic	df	Sig.
PRAITRAN	.115	57	.059

a. Lilliefors Significance Correction

Table10.5 Kolmogorov-Smirnov test of normality on PRAI square root transformation

The attitude and competence sub-scales of the RSCS, both retained similar distributions to those reported when the boys were aged 6 (see chapter 9). The attitude sub-scale was positively skewed and the competence sub-scale suggested a bi-modal distribution. The difficulty sub-scale had changed from a bi-modal distribution to a normal distribution (figures10.7 - 10.9). ERAS academic and recreational sub-scales were also normally distributed (appendix 6, section C).

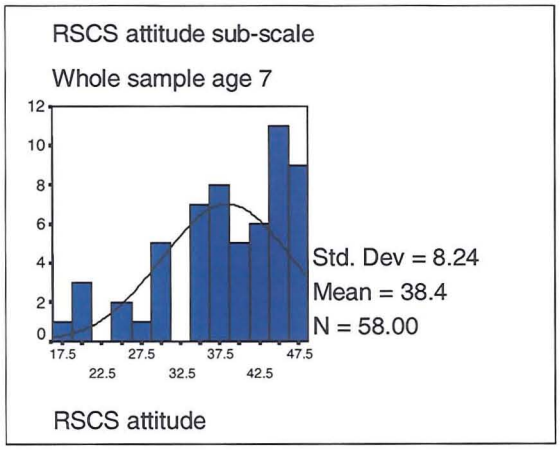

Figure10.7 Histogram of RSCS attitude sub-scale at age seven

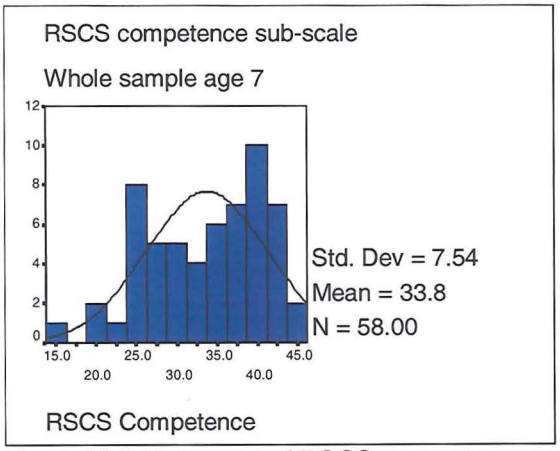

Figure10.8 Histogram of RSCS competence sub-scale at age seven

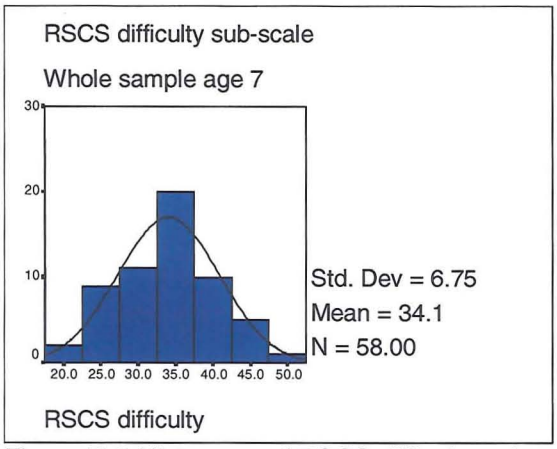

Figure10.9 Histogram of RSCS difficulty sub-scale at age seven

10.5. Changes in attitude over time

A comparison of attitude scores at the end of Year Two with those at the end of Year One suggested that attitudes were beginning to become more stable. A standardised composite attitude score based on the PRAI, ERAS and RSCS correlated significantly with a standardised attitude score from PRAI and RSCS the previous year ($r=0.51$ $p<000$). Means of each of the attitudinal scores fluctuated slightly but not significantly (Appendix 6, section D). Attitudinal scores at the end of Year Two did not correlate with attitudinal scores measured in the term prior to entry to Year One.

10.6. Relationship between reading attitude scales

Correlations between the ERAS, PRAI and RSCS, tabulated in Appendix 6, section E, emphasise the distinct dimensions of reading attitude reflecting the tri-partite theoretical construct incorporating affect, cognition and behaviour. The PRAI, ERAS and the attitudinal sub-scale of RSCS all correlate significantly with each other and are indicators of the affective dimension of reading. Within this domain, the three instruments have slightly different focuses. The PRAI for instance reflected the importance of others in the reading process, as well as attitude towards different genres of reading material. The ERAS distinguished between academic and recreational reading. A detailed description of these scales and their differences was

presented in earlier chapters. The whole sample data re-enforced the validity of each of these instruments and their sub-scales in the measurement of 'affect' in reading attitude.

Within reading self-concept, 'competence' and 'difficulty' with reading remained independent of 'attitude'. The authors of the RSCS (Chapman & Tunmer, 1997) found that by Year Three, attitude was, indeed, affected by perceptions of difficulty and competence. In line with these findings, this relationship was erratic in this sample of Year Two boys. There was no correlation between either sub-scale and the PRAI scores and between 'difficulty' and the recreational dimension of the ERAS. This was perhaps a period of transition where relationships between all three sub-components were beginning to be established, but had not become firmly entrenched. The affective dimension of reading retained the positive distribution common among attitudinal scores of young children. The mean score of the RSCS attitude sub-scale was significantly higher than the sub-scale scores of both competence and difficulty (see Appendix 6, section F, non-parametric test). At the same time, the boys in this sample were developing more complex ideas within the cognitive dimension of reading attitude, of which perception of difficulty and competence had been observed as elements at the end of Year One. Data from the attitude scales at the end of Year Two suggested that the affective and cognitive dimensions of the attitude construct were being consolidated. The affective dimension of reading attitude remained an independent but integral element of the reading attitude construct.

10.7. Relationship between reading attitude and reading achievement scores

The difference between the cognitive and affective dimensions of reading were further emphasised in the differing relationships between these and measures of reading ability. Neither ERAS nor PRAI correlated significantly with Neale comprehension or accuracy scores. Neale accuracy scores showed correlations with reading self concept: RSCS sub-scale attitude ($r=0.26$ $p< 0.05$), RSCS sub-scale competence ($r=0.27$ $p<0.05$) and RSCS sub-scale difficulty ($r=0.32$ $p<0.05$) (figures

10.10-10.12). Neale comprehension scores correlated only with RSCS sub-scale competence ($r=0.30$ $p<0.05$) and RSCS sub-scale attitude ($r=0.31$ $p<0.05$).

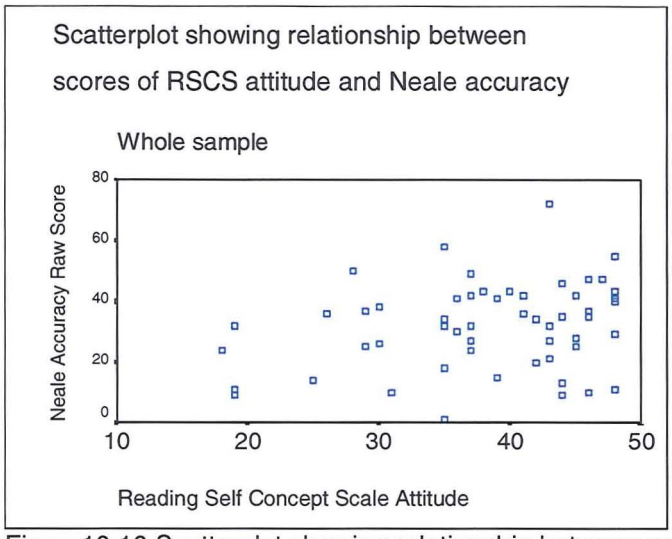

Figure10.10 Scatterplot showing relationship between scores of RSCS attitude sub-scale and Neale Analysis of Reading Ability (accuracy)

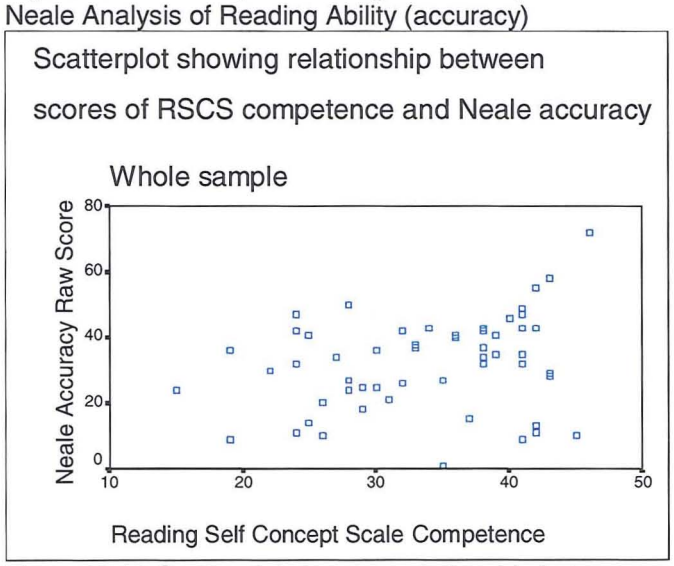

Figure10.11 Scatterplot showing relationship between scores of RSCS competence sub-scale and Neale Analysis of Reading Ability (accuracy)

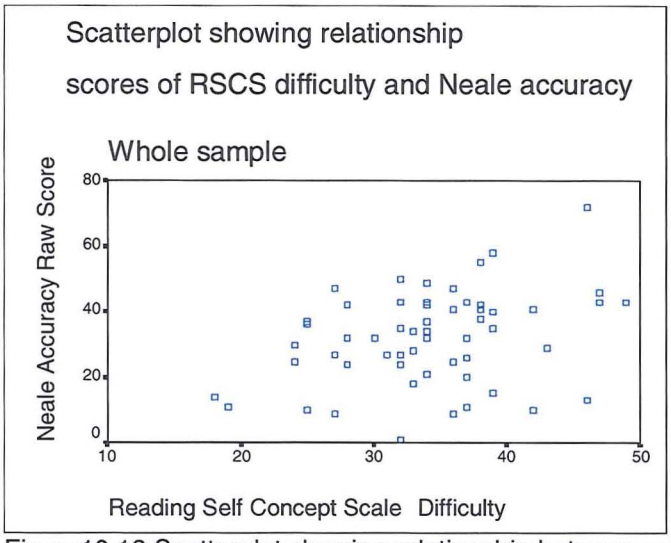

Figure10.12 Scatterplot showing relationship between scores of RSCS difficulty sub-scale and Neale Analysis of Reading Ability (accuracy)

Reading attitude was only just beginning to establish its relationship with perceptions of reading difficulty and reading competency, so it was not surprising to find a fairly weak relationship between reading attitude and actual achievement. As illustrated in figure 10.10, boys at the age of 7 could often retain positive feelings even though their reading skills were weak. It should be noted that those with very negative attitudes to reading also tended to have very weak reading skills. The data also confirmed that the boys were not making accurate assessments of their own abilities (figure 10.11) both under-estimating and over-estimating their achievements. The closest relationship lay between perception of reading difficulty and reading accuracy scores (figure10.12). Not surprisingly, those who were not reading well found the task difficult. Of more concern was the fact that many of those who were reading at a satisfactory or higher level still found the task a difficult one. These results may reflect the considerable demands being placed on children at the end of Key Stage One and under pressure from SATs. These demands were certainly reflected in the comments of the children themselves (see chapter 11) and were frequently echoed by their parents (chapter 12-14).

The weakness of these relationships may be explained by the age of the sample. These boys had just turned seven and, as commented upon previously, young children tend to hold generally positive attitudes. Exploration of these relationships within the

groups, however, suggested a significant environmental influence. Within the Nursery class group Neale accuracy scores correlated with RSCS sub-scale difficulty ($r=0.42$ $p<0.05$) and RSCS sub-scale competence ($r=0.42$ $p<0.05$), while Neale comprehension scores correlated with RSCS sub-scale competence ($r=0.45$ $p<0.05$) and RSCS sub-scale attitude ($r= 0.40$ $p<0.05$). For Reception class children there were no relationships between any of the achievement and attitude scores for the group as a whole. However when a sub-group analysis was conducted, excluding mothers with degree level and higher educational qualifications, significant correlations did occur. In this sub-group Neale accuracy correlated with RSCS sub-scale difficulty ($r=0.30$ $p<0.05$) and Neale comprehension with RSCS sub-scale competence ($r=0.28$ $p<0.05$) and RSCS sub-scale attitude ($r=0.29$ $p<0.05$). Given that all the reading self-concept scores within the sub-group were lower than within the whole Reception class group, and that RSCS competence was significantly lower than for the Nursery class group, the data suggests that Reception class was having some detrimental effect on the boys' reading self concept. This was effectively counteracted by mothers with higher educational qualifications who thus obscured the direct relationships found between achievement and reading attitude and self-concept in the sample as a whole.

10.8. Comparison of Reception and Nursery class groups on measures of reading attitude and reading self-concept

Boys from both Reception and Nursery class groups were compared on measures of reading attitude and reading self-concept at the end of Year Two (fig.10.13-10.20).

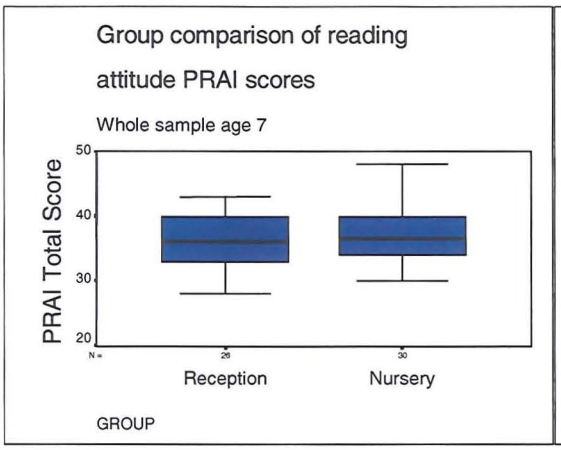

Figure 10.13 Group comparison of PRAI scores at age seven

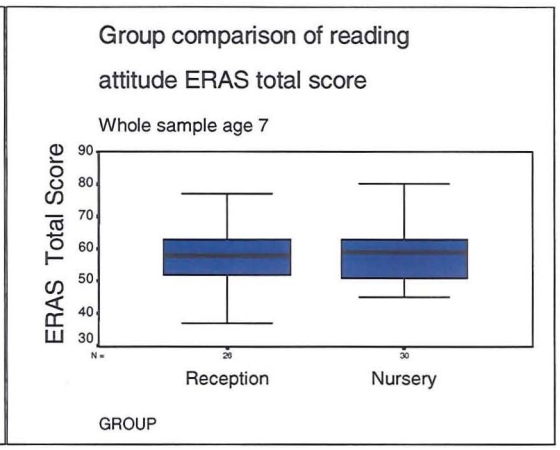

Figure 10.14 Group comparison of ERAS total scores at age seven

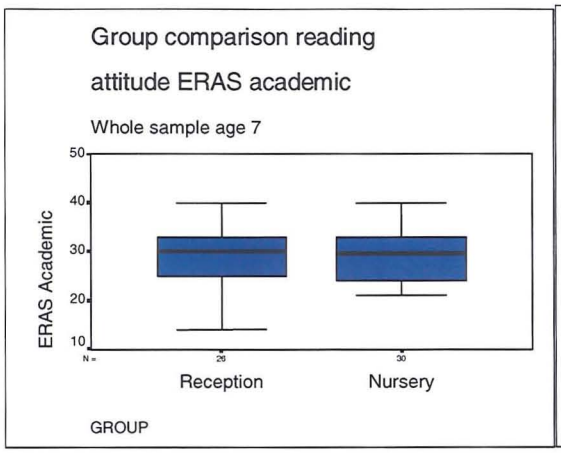

Figure 10.15 Group comparison of ERAS academic sub-scale scores at age seven

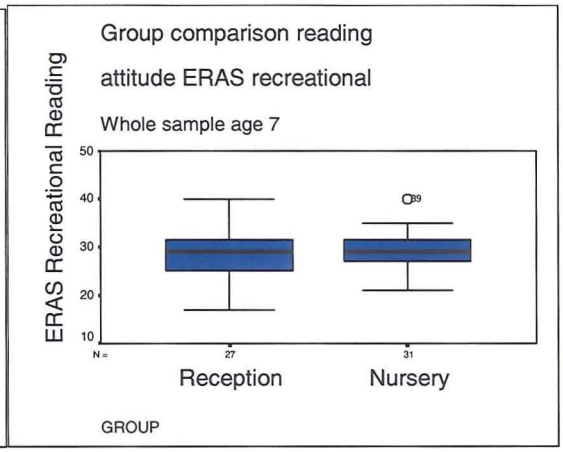

Figure 10.16 Group comparison of ERAS recreational sub-scale scores at age seven

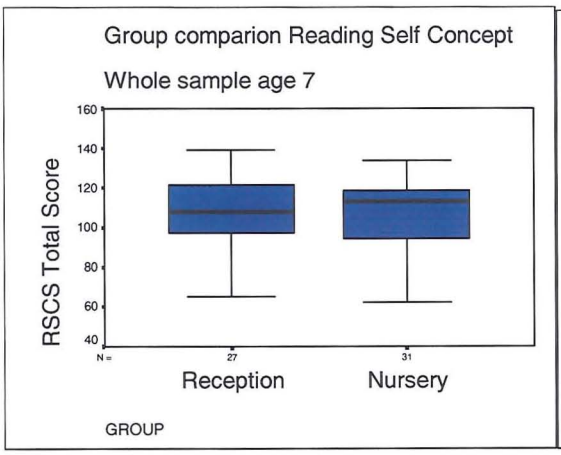

Figure 10.17 Group comparison of RSCS scores at age seven

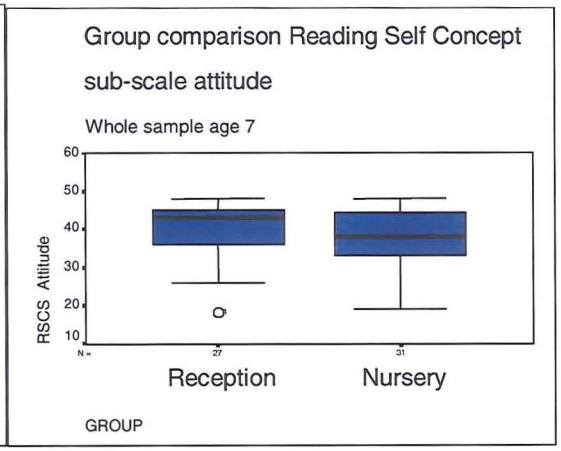

Figure 10.18 Group comparison of RSCS attitude sub-scale scores at age seven

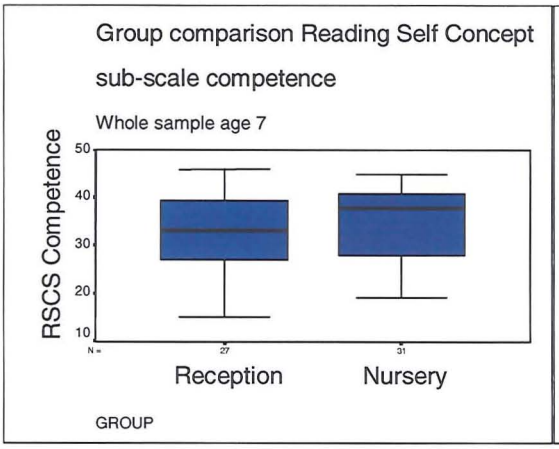

Figure 10.19 Group comparison of RSCS competence sub-scale scores at age seven

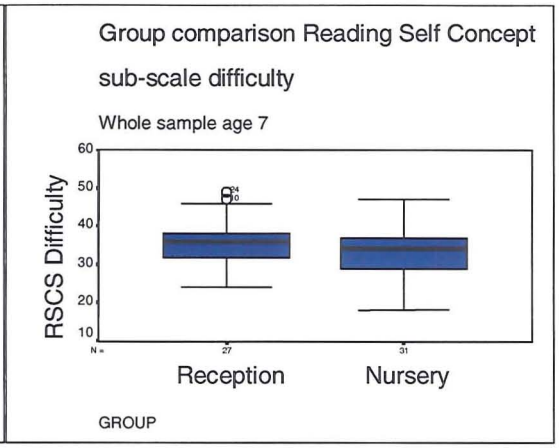

Figure 10.20 Group comparison of RSCS difficulty sub-scale scores at age seven

The between-group differences did not reach statistical significance (appendix 6, section G) in the sample as whole. However, when a sub-sample comparison was carried out excluding mothers with degree or post-graduate qualifications, a difference in reading self-concept emerged. Boys from the Reception class group perceived themselves to be less competent at reading than their counterparts in the Nursery class. They achieved a mean of 30.43 on the RSCS competence sub-scale compared to 34.65 for the Nursery class group ($t=2.07$ $p<0.04$). This did not reflect their actual reading achievement. Just prior to entry to Year One, boys in the Reception class group showed more extreme negative attitudes than those in Nursery class. This was likely to have been a reflection of the more formal demands of the Reception class environment. A year later, at the end of Year One, group differences were identified in the boys' perception of reading difficulty. Boys with Reception class experience perceived reading to be more difficult than boys from Nursery classes. At the end of Year Two, Reception class boys had poorer reading self-concept in the domain of perception of competence.

10.9. Discussion of results at end of Key Stage One

Reading achievement

In spite of the small sample employed in this study, the data suggests that the extra terms of Reception class offered to some of these young boys did not have a direct impact on reading achievement of boys by the end of Key Stage One. No between-group differences were found in scores from a range of phonological awareness tests administered before entry into Year One. These tests have been found to be good predictors of later reading achievement and a standardised literacy score derived from these tests did indeed correlate well with Neale Analysis test scores at the end of Year Two. A simple regression analysis (appendix 6, section H) suggested that the early literacy score accounted for 26% of the variance in Neale accuracy scores and 40% in Neale comprehension scores. This rose to 26% and 45% respectively when BPVS was added as a predictor.

These findings are interesting in the light of Sharp's study (Sharp & Hutchinson, 1997) which suggested that children with just six terms of schooling were at a disadvantage. The children in her sample performed less well on the SATs Reading Task and on Teacher Assessment at Key Stage One. However, unlike the Neale Analysis of Reading Ability, SATs results are not normalised for age. Moreover, their study had no baseline measurement for these children nor any information about their pre-school experience. The boys in this study had all attended Nurseries attached to schools, which were run in similar ways. In the term prior to entry to Year One, they were at no disadvantage in terms of their phonological awareness test scores nor scores on the BPVS when compared to the Reception class group. Attendance was part-time, either a morning or afternoon session, and the boys all progressed into Year One at the same school with their peer group. Procedures were in place for the familiarisation of the boys with the school prior to entry so minimising the disruption and problems associated with entry to school. These factors could have contributed to the easier academic progression of the boys and may account for reading outcome

scores at the end of Key Stage One which were equivalent to those achieved by the Reception class boys.

Standards of comprehension and accuracy were comparable in both groups, with extremes at either end of the reading scale. In the top 10% of accuracy and comprehension scores, four boys belonged to the Nursery class group and three to the Reception class group. Among the lowest scoring 10% on Neale accuracy test scores, two belonged to the Reception and four to the Nursery class group. The lowest 10% on Neale comprehension scores included three Reception class boys and two Nursery class boys.

The results also suggested that early attitude scores did not affect later achievement. Given the recognised instability of young children's attitudes, this finding was not surprising. No relationship was found between any of the earliest measurements of attitude toward reading and achievement at age 7. A correlation was found between the RSCS sub-scale attitude at age 6 and reading achievement (Neale comprehension) at age 7 ($r=0.33$ $p<0.01$). This was an isolated piece of data, which may indicate the emergence of an association but from which it would be difficult to draw any firm conclusions. Even by age 7 the relationship between reading attitude and reading achievement remained erratic. A small correlation was found between the attitude sub-scale of RSCS and Neale accuracy scores, but no other significant relationships between reading ability and reading attitude were identified. The correlations between scores on the sub-scales of the RSCS, difficulty and competence, and Neale accuracy, did not exceed 0.32 but showed a significant association ($p< 0.05$).

Reading attitude

In the context of this study, reading attitude has been analysed together with reading achievement as an independent component of reading development. Analysis of data has confirmed that these two dimensions of reading development take place simultaneously, but, in the early years, fairly independently of one another. The

results did not point to a simple association between attitude and ability, with positive attitudes developing as children become more fluent readers, as might have been expected.

Instead, the data suggested that the development of attitude is a complex process, a response to a range of different factors. These young children have not yet isolated their reading attitudes from the contexts of reading and respond accordingly in a wide variety of ways to a wide variety of situations. This was most evident in their response to the PRAI which showed some interesting patterns between the individual items. Although these scores have to be regarded with caution (the reliability of individual items is far less than that of the total score) it was interesting to note that the highest scoring item was one which represented non-fiction reading (item 14). This scored a mean of 2.6 on a range between 1 and 3, where 1 represents the least favourable attitude and 3 the most. This preference for non-fiction supports data reported elsewhere (Moss, 1999a).

The lowest means were obtained for two photographs representing independent/solo reading of books (items 5 and 9). Four items representing solo reading (items 3,5, 9 and 16) all correlated with each other and all had quite low means ranging between 1.8 and 2.1. The reading of comics seemed to be distinct from other types of reading and at this stage was not a particularly popular form of reading. This item (15) did not correlate with anything else and had a mean of 2.1. It was also interesting to note that mean scores for the three non-reading items of the PRAI (representing drawing, playing with the computer and outdoor play) were all higher than for the reading items, excluding the non-fiction item 14. No distinction emerged between attitudes towards recreational and academic reading.

The more detailed illustration of reading context in the PRAI than within the 10-item attitude sub-scale of the RSCS may account for the more positive scores on the latter. Nevertheless, attitude toward reading remained poor or indifferent among many children, with a number of extreme cases.

The experience of Year Two had not succeeded in making the perception of reading any easier for children with significant numbers continuing to find reading difficult and expressing feelings of incompetence. Comparisons drawn with Year One data showed a small but non-significant drop in the means of these sub-scales. The competence sub-scale fell from a maximum of 50 to a maximum of 46 and a minimum of 18 to 15. This was surprising, given the actual improvement in children's reading performance, after a year at school.

The data also confirmed that the early entry into school had not had any long-term effect on boys' attitudinal outcomes. While the immediate effect of Reception class on boys' reading attitudes has been identified (chapters 7 & 8), and some effect was still evident at the end of Year One, this had disappeared by the end of Year Two.

Summary

Evidence from both reading attitude and reading achievement data from this sample of boys at the end of Key Stage One suggests that there has been no group benefit derived from the extra terms of school experience in a Reception class environment. The absence of clear advantage in either the attitudinal dimension of reading or in reading skills themselves for children who have experienced up to a year's extra school must call into question the rationale for present local education authority policy. Although substituting Nursery classes with Reception classes offers financial incentives as a result of the very different staff ratios operated in these two settings, the educational advantages have remained largely anecdotal. Data from this study suggest that for the youngest cohort of boys, reading can develop equally well with just two years of full-time school. To what extent this quantitative data is supported by qualitative findings is the subject of the next chapter.

CHAPTER 11

BOYS' ATTITUDES TOWARD READING AT THE END OF KEY STAGE ONE: A QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS

11.1. Introduction

The previous chapter described boys' attitudinal scores in quantitative terms using a range of reading attitude scales. This analysis was complemented by a more in-depth exploration of these attitudes through the methodology employed both prior to entry to school and at the end of Year One. The rationale and details of the methodology were presented in chapter 8. Out of the original sample of 60 boys, 57 transcripts were collected. Two boys had moved away and could not be contacted. The third was seen at home having been absent from school on previous visits. The home context and lack of time prevented this interview data from being tape-recorded. The analysis of this chapter was conducted on 57 transcripts and, as before, was guided by the tri-partite conception of the attitude construct incorporating the affective, cognitive and behavioural components of reading.

11.2. The affective dimension of reading at the end of Key Stage One

Standardised scores on the PRAI, RSCS and the ERAS at the end of Key Stage One placed boys along the affective dimension of reading attitude. Those with scores above the 85th percentile were defined as the positive attitude group, while those in the lowest 15% were defined as the negative attitude group (appendix 7, section A). This grouping was adopted as a guideline for analysis but, clearly, boys' feelings about reading lay along a continuum, where the maintenance of rigid boundaries would be artificial.

11.3. Examining negative attitudes toward reading at age seven

The 'negative reading attitude' group consisted of seven boys (table 11.1). Three belonged to the Reception class group and four to the Nursery class group. Adam, Alex and Ricki, highlighted in bold, had all been identified within the negative group when younger. Alex had developed strikingly negative attitudes at a very early stage and his development, discussed in some detail in earlier chapters, is analysed below. The four boys from the Nursery class group had not held strongly negative attitudes previously. This grouping might suggest that negative attitudes among the Reception class boys were more stable than negative attitudes among the Nursery group. Three out of six Reception class boys retained negative attitudes from the previous year compared to none in the Nursery group.

STANDARDIZED SCORE	RECEPTION BOY	NURSERY BOY
Low range: negative attitude		
-1.71	**Alex**	
-1.70	**Adam**	
-1.60	Amit	
-1.46		Tim
-1.25	**Ricki**	
-1.19		Kevin
-1.06		Saul
-0.99		Dominic

Table 11.1 Group distribution of boys aged seven with negative reading attitudes

Most of these boys were not were not achieving well in reading. A summary is set out below in table11.2. But these figures do not suggest that reading skills alone offer a satisfactory explanation for the poor attitudes among this group of children. Saul was a highly accurate reader but his scores suggested that he encountered problems with comprehension. This discrepancy could well account for his poor attitudinal scores. It would seem that for some reason he was not engaging with the content of the text and

therefore in a difficult position from which to develop positive attitudes toward reading. Adam and Amit were fairly average readers but their comprehension lagged behind accuracy. This was true for the sample as a whole and may account in part for some boys' inability to develop positive attitudes.

Reception class group	Nursery class group	Difference between Reading Age (accuracy) and actual age in months	Reading achievement scores (Neale accuracy scores in months)	Difference between Reading Age (comprehension) and actual age in months	Reading achievement scores (Neale comprehension scores in months)
Alex		- 7	76	-5	78
Adam		+7	89	+1	83
Amit		+7	90	+3	86
Ricki		-6	78	-14	70
	Tim	-17	64	-3	78
	Kevin	-19	62	-20	61
	Saul	+23	105	-9	73
	Dominic	-17	67	-3	81

Table 11.2. A comparison of Reading Age with chronological age of boys who hold negative attitudes toward reading

As suggested earlier these scores were used as indicators of attitude. The qualitative analysis undertaken from the data collected through interviews allowed a more comprehensive understanding of what lay behind these scores.

Alex's dislike of reading had been firmly entrenched by the end of the Reception class year, with attitudinal scores in the lowest 15th percentile accompanied by and reflected in a very negative commentary. Combined with a seeming lack of purpose, reading had also led to unpleasant interactions with the adults around him. By the end of Key Stage One, reading seemed to foster a particularly hostile relationship with Alex's father. Alex's intense dislike of reading was fuelled by the lack of support he felt he was getting: "I don't like reading them to my dad. He goes mental. He shouts 'no' ", and elsewhere: "I hate reading a book with my dad, he always yells at me, yell,

yell, yell, yell, yell". Alex acknowledged that reading with his mother was a more constructive. He enjoyed reading with her: "Cos if I get stuck on a word she always sounds them out." He gave the same reason for his enjoyment of group reading: "I like reading with the teacher because if I'm stuck sometimes in reading group often people read it out". Unfortunately, it was the paternal relationship that seemed to overshadow Alex's reading experiences. Even the reading of comics (referred to by Alex as cartoon magazines) was marred by this relationship: "I don't like reading them because he would yell at me still". Alex could not enjoy choosing books at school because he knew that he would then have to read them at home. Both parents insisted that reading should be a compulsory home activity focussed on reading practice. Alex suggested that his mum rarely read to him, echoing statements similar to those made two years previously: " I always have to read to her". It was clear that Alex's difficulties with reading and his resistance to it had led to a restricted view about reading. A complete absence of reference to libraries sets this transcript apart from almost all others in the sample. A number of the photographs prompted children to talk about libraries. This response was not triggered in Alex. One can safely assume that the library at the very least did not play a significant part in his reading world. Perhaps it was absent all together. The limited boundaries of his reading world were also suggested by his restricted knowledge of genre. Comparing comics to books he explained: "They are just bigger and there are more words in them". Alex did not refer to information or non-fiction books and seemed unable to identify them as a category, even when directly prompted to do so. The picture of Alex at 7 was of a child highly preoccupied with the task of learning to reading, whose anxiety had been considerably exacerbated by the demands placed on him by the home environment. The focus on attainment from the very earliest stages seemed to have inhibited the development of a wider appreciation of reading. Alex had not gained any real insight into the purpose of this activity or any knowledge of the range of material which could be accessed through reading.

Ricki (R) had much in common with Alex's reading profile. He too had already developed poor reading attitudes by the age of 6, and was a poor reader. His very low level of comprehension was mirrored by a hazy understanding of the wider purpose of reading and apparently very little exposure to the written word except in a school

based context. He had not become an independent reader and reading remained limited to interactive situations, requiring the involvement of a more proficient reader. Ricki (R) claimed not to visit a library outside the school one, and at school the library was not primarily associated in his mind with a place to choose books. Clearly all sorts of school activities took place there, activities which assumed greater significance than that offered by it as a source of books. Ricki suggested that his use of the library was infrequent and a result of direct teacher instruction. Ricki interpreted the majority of reading contexts within the framework of having to learn, in particular: "to learn the words". The teacher reads to the children "so we can learn"; he gave the same reason for a child reading to mother. The only story he could recall by name, associated with the teacher reading to a group of children, was "Biff and Chip", characters from the Oxford Reading Tree. Ricki identified the type of books he tended to choose as "information type stuff". In this he might fall within the category of poor boy readers who used non-fiction to obscure their level of reading proficiency (see section 8.6 and Moss (Moss, 1999a)). Ricki was certainly concerned about appearances: "If there were just pictures that would look all babyish and stuff". He gave no explicit reason for choosing non-fiction comparable to that provided by a number of other boys. Other boys' explanations of the photograph for PRAI item 14 illustrated an understanding which was not apparent in any of Ricki's comments:

"he might want to find something out about the sea" [Harry (R)]

"maybe he's been to an aquarium and he's forgotten what all the fish are and he wants to see if the fish are there that he saw" [Matthew (R)].

"he wants to find out about fish" [Jed (R)].

In this context Ricki could only comment "maybe because I want to". Ricki was also the only boy in the sample unable to identify PRAI item 15, boys reading a comic. Although not all boys had succeeded in using the word 'comic', all others had offered alternatives such as 'magazines' or 'newspapers'. Ricki had "no idea".

Kevin (N) was also a very poor reader (see table 11.2), by now identified as a child with special needs. Like Ricki his exposure to books was minimal. According to his own report, at home he was read to only by an older nine-year-old sister. He claimed not to read with either his mother or teacher on an individual basis. At school he read only "in a circle" with a few other children. Not surprisingly his book knowledge was

very limited. Like Alex, but few others, he did not recognise an information book. Nor was he able to recall any story read by his teacher. The titles he recalled were ones he had at home and were read to him by his sister. These included the Mr Men series of books, Disney titles and The Three Little Pigs. No mention was made of a library, suggesting this did not lie within his realm of experience. He was drawn to comics through their activity section, his enjoyment of colouring in, and as a 'collector'; not as a reader. Given his inability to access the written word independently there seemed to be a dearth of opportunities for him to do so, at least so far as he was able to describe himself.

Tim and Adam were both newcomers to the poor attitude group but now, together with Alex, were in the very lowest scoring group. Tim's attitudes towards reading had not changed radically since the previous year. In terms of scores, he had only just been outside the poor attitude group at age six and a change of school since then had not had any obvious positive impact. Tim was very conscious of reading proficiency levels and reading difficulty, both characteristic features of boys' beliefs at the end of Year One. But while he was able to recite the order of the colour coded reading system ("you go on to orange, then black ....") he could not recall any book titles. With some prompting he was able to name the book he was currently reading but no other books were mentioned by name. Like many of the boys, he talked enthusiastically about dinosaur books but he was not aware of genre, unable to identify or label fact or information books. Reading was a compulsory activity: "I have to do it. Teacher says and mum". As portrayed by Tim the onus for reading lay primarily on himself. Library books were borrowed but not read. He looked at the pictures but no one read the books to him because they were too long.

Adam and Amit, both from the Reception class group, shared a similar reading profile. Both were quite competent readers but both achieved better in accuracy than comprehension. Adam's reading world was still heavily dominated by the reading book and reading levels. In choosing books he described the choice of "a suitable book" as guided by its level of difficulty rather than content. He described himself as

being on "level seven" [8]. Adam was struggling to distinguish fact from fiction and was still somewhat confused by the terminology: "She said, fiction is facts and non-fiction is like stories?". Amit (R) continued to view reading as a difficult task and for this reason did not enjoy it. He, like several others in this small group, also seemed to be lacking the right sort of reading interactions, complaining that his mother was "always watching telly while I'm stuck on a word". In spite of enjoying particular books, he could not see reading in general as a pleasurable activity. Rajiv (R) was a hesitant reader whose accuracy and comprehension reading scores lagged, respectively, four and two months behind his chronological age. At the end of Year One he had expressed fairly poor attitudes toward reading as demonstrated by attitudinal scores. Unfortunately, no interview was available from the previous year so that no light could be thrown on these negative attitude scores. However the interview at age 7 hints at possible causes. Rajiv (R) described the books he read as "hard always". Outside school, his experience with reading came across as minimal. He claimed to read to his mother just once a week "to help me with hard words". According to his account his mother did not read to him: "My dad reads to me but he's far away and I only see him every Wednesday or Thursday". Given the detail with which he was able to recall the stories read to him at school, this may well have been an accurate assessment. One can surmise that the lack of support had contributed both to the feeling that reading was a hard task and, possibly, to his lack of achievement in this area. In this context "I'd rather be playing" was not a surprising comment. Nevertheless, Rajiv (R) had developed a reasonable understanding of the variety of purposes associated with reading and some knowledge of different genres. He distinguished storybooks from information books and expressed his own particular preference for books about dinosaurs. He was one of very few children who mentioned the name of an author associated with a particular story he had heard at school. Story time with the teacher was something that he enjoyed and he recalled stories in some detail, describing one in particular as "funny" and "mad". However, this type of exposure to stories was limited to the "afternoon", clearly an established school routine. This limitation seemed to set boundaries around the positive experiences that Rajiv (R) was able to derive from reading. As for many the onus for reading lay primarily on the child.

[8] Possibly a reference to the stages of the Oxford Reading Tree but Adam did not elaborate

The interaction between parent and child was a recurrent motif in the data. Bruno fell just outside the 'negative group' but his attitudinal scores were low (see appendix 7, section A). He had managed to make a clear distinction in his mind between reading independently and being read to. The latter he thoroughly enjoyed. He had been through Harry Potter a number of times with his mother and was about to embark on Gillian Cross's 'The Demon Headmaster'. He had an abundant supply of books (in his own opinion too many to read) and claimed to enjoy both fiction and non-fiction. His transcript gave just one clue to his antagonism. This lay in the adult-child interaction prompted by reading. He recognised item 10 (child reading to mother) as something he did a lot with little enjoyment: "Because I sometimes get stuck on words and my mum gets really mad". At school he often had to read with a mum, again something he did not like, expressing a preference for reading to the teacher: "cos I like the teacher". His low score on the reading self-concept sub-scale of competence indicated that the negative reading interactions he had experienced with adults may well have damaged his confidence in his ability to read thereby influencing his reading attitudes.

11.4. Negative reading attitudes: summary and interpretation

Given the diversity of boys within this group, no single explanatory factor can account for the development of these negative attitudes. But recurrent themes within the transcripts together with an analysis of reading score patterns do hint at a number of possible causal factors.

Poor reading achievement scores were prevalent although not universal (see table 11.2.) With the exception of one boy, the poor attitude group had no high achievers in terms of comprehension. This was not surprising: lack of comprehension imposes a direct barrier to enjoyment. Moreover children are quickly drawn into the negative cycle of Matthew effects (Stanovich, 1986). Children who find reading difficult are less prone to read and hence gain less experience in reading. Only direct and focussed interventions can break into the cycle and none of the boys in this study were part of such an intervention.

Within this group, as for the sample as a whole, reading accuracy skills were on average higher than comprehension skills. Mean scores for accuracy lagged one and a half months behind chronological age, while comprehension scores were just under four months behind. But the higher accuracy scores were not coincidental. The emphasis on reading accuracy was reflected in a wide variety of reading situations discussed by the boys.

Within the literacy hour's 'guided reading' for instance, the teacher's primary role as perceived by the boys was to help out on difficult words: "if they get stuck on a word the teacher says it" [Tim (N)], "So when we get stuck she'll help us work it out" [Billy (N)]. The same objective dominated the parental role. Boys referred to reading with a parent in order "to practise reading" [Jed (R)], "to help me with hard words" [Rajiv (R)]. The task was often described as compulsory: "my mum tells me to read every day...cos she wants me to learn very quickly" [Oscar (N)]. For Oscar even the library was associated with the task of learning to read: "to get a book so you can learn words". The emphasis on the acquisition of decoding skills was projected as the dominant concern of the adults, apparently at the expense of an interest in content. Discussion of stories was not mentioned by any of the boys in this group.

Parents also continued to have the same teaching role as identified at the end of Year One. A number of the photographic stimuli showed a child sharing a book with a parent. The photographs gave no clue of whether adult was reading to child or vice versa. Yet almost universally these boys interpreted this to be the latter, a situation of reading practice. Among this group of boys there was little evidence of provision for opportunities of enjoying and accessing books, simply by being read to. Only one child mentioned specific books he was enjoying with his mother. Bruno had read and re-read Harry Potter and was embarking on the Demon Headmaster. He found big chapter books "exciting", "funny" and sometimes "scary". But for the most part boys made no mention of being read to and when asked claimed that this did not happen. A variety of reasons were offered: poor parental reading skills, time factors, (nobody reads the library book "cos it's too long") and family situations, ("My dad reads to me but he's far away and I only see him every Wednesday or Thursday" [Rajiv (R)]. Some of the boys had a bedtime story routine but were otherwise generally

encouraged to do the reading themselves: "I always have to read to her" [Alex (R)], "when I ask her 'can you read some?' she says 'no you have to read it'" [Adam (R)]. In school much the same pattern emerged. Teacher story-time was limited to short, well-defined periods so that children would seem to have limited exposure to stories beyond the ones they were reading themselves.

For some boys, parental concern was combined with a high degree of impatience which accounted directly for the boys' dislike of reading as an activity. Bruno and Alex, quoted earlier, offered particularly striking examples. In Bruno's case this seemed to get in the way of the excitement he could find in books. "Ye *(sic)* I normally like books, big books...big chapter books". Nevertheless, the learning dimension overshadowed his enjoyment, leaving him with mixed feelings about reading. This ambivalence was evident when he spoke of reading with his father: " Well I quite like it but he is a bit scary when you get muddled, when you don't try on a word".

The data suggested that parents were contributing directly, if inadvertently, to the development of poor reading attitudes. Whereas pre-school children would seem to greatly benefit from parental involvement (Taylor, 1983; Spreadbury, 1995) (see discussion in chapter 3) expectations growing from the school environment harmed rather than enhanced the parental role. No doubt the relationship between parental role and boys' attitude was not unidirectional. Resistance to reading or problems with reading could have had a detrimental effect on how parents interacted with their children. Equally, unreasonable parental demands could have had a direct impact on their children. Whatever the direction of the influence, these were demands driven by the high degree of anxiety surrounding the acquisition of reading skills. As reiterated by the boys in this sub-sample time and again, the process of learning to read was parents' and teachers' primary concern. For some, the concern was manifested in an unhelpful way compounding other difficulties encountered by these pupils.

For several boys, reading had become disliked because it had been made into a difficult task. "I don't like reading because there are some hard words" [Oscar (N)]. Even quite a competent reader like Amit (R) continued to feel he was struggling: "Cos

teachers go really fast and I can't keep up and I keep loosing sentences too". These boys' limited exposure to books was evident in their limited understanding of genre and restricted references to specific titles. Less than half of this group had grasped both the terminology and meaning of fact/information and fiction books compared to the majority who recognised comics. (Seven different titles of comics were mentioned although few read them). Three of the boys in this group mentioned no book by name. Three others mentioned Biff and Chip as titles they were reading (characters from the Oxford Reading Tree scheme). The concept of the reading book was particularly prominent and these boys were very aware of the grading system of these books by colour or level. "After level seven, book seven, you get to choose what you want" [Benjamin (R)]. In response to a general enquiry about what one boy was reading, he told me it was "a green book" [Saul (N)]. Reading books, or school books as they were sometimes called, were those associated with compulsory reading either at school or at home. Disney books were mentioned twice and there were three references to fairy tales/fables (Goldilocks, The Lion and the Mouse and The Three Little Pigs). Only five boys mentioned titles not falling within these categories and with the exception of Bruno these were all young picture books such as Spot the Dog, Mr Gumpy and the Mr Men books. According to the reports of these boys only two among the poor attitude readers had had any exposure to paperback fiction written for this age group. Amit mentioned Roald Dahl as a favourite.

To what extent this was true of the group as a whole is analysed below. But this evidence would indicate that the growth of poor attitudes among this group of boys was the result not only of the difficulties they encountered with the technicalities of reading but the dearth of alternative substitutes which might have helped to make their reading world more exciting. Their limited encounter with children's literature through their own independent reading was compounded by teacher and parental focus on the acquisition of decoding skills, which emerged time and again as the primary focus of almost all reading activity.

11.5. Examining positive attitudes toward reading at age seven

Boys in the positive attitude group were identified in the same way as boys had been identified as belonging to the negative attitude group. In the same way too the scores were used as indicators along an attitudinal continuum. The views of some boys who lay outside these two extreme groups are incorporated in the discussion.

Reading achievement scores among the positive attitude group included very able readers as well as very poor readers. Half the sample scored above their chronological age on both reading accuracy and comprehension scores and the consistent discrepancy between these scores found in the negative attitude group was not present (table 11.3).

Among the able readers, reading comprehension was close to or higher than accuracy scores. Perhaps better access to texts increased comprehension, thereby making reading more interesting and inducing more positive attitudes. These scores may well be a reflection of the positive cycle of success (see section 4.4.4.), identified and discussed by Stanovich as 'Matthew effects' (Stanovich, 1986).

Reception class group	Nursery class group	Difference between Reading Age (accuracy) and actual age in months	Reading achievement scores (Neale accuracy scores in months)	Difference between Reading Age (comprehension) and actual age in months	Reading achievement scores (Neale comprehension scores in months)
Kenny		(score < 4 years)	0	-16	66
Arnold		+9	93	+5	89
Jed		+27	111	+26	110
Percy		-21	62	-17	66
	Justin	0	81	-5	76
	Simon	+22	103	+23	104
	Jeremy	+7	97	+14	104
	Peter	-3	79	-1	81
	Dennis	+12	94	-6	76

Table 11.3 A comparison of Reading Age with chronological age of boys who hold positive attitudes toward reading

Among the poorer readers, positive attitudes were driven by a real interest in the subject matter. The three boys who scored at or below chronological level on both Neale Analysis reading scores all expressed a preference for reading non-fiction. This would seem to lend support to Moss's findings, (see 8.6), that boys use non-fiction to disguise their reading level. But the transcripts also suggested that the boys were expressing a genuine enthusiasm for the subjects: "Well there's one about where eels live and also water skippers and also how big they are. They are this big and this long and I've seen a real water skipper at the zoo" [Percy (R)]. "We're working about rainforests and we like reading about those" [Justin (N)].

These boys' experience with books was helpfully mediated by parents and peer group. The parental role as described by boys at the positive end of the attitudinal spectrum contrasted quite sharply with that described above. Several boys made specific reference to parents reading to them: "She reads me stories with a lot of pages because I get tired of reading them" [Arnold (R)]. "Sometimes when well I like Stephen King books, the scary ones, and she reads them to me" [Arthur (R)]. Carl (N)

talked of his sister (who was "obsessed with books") filling this role. She was attempting to read Harry Potter to her brother who, while claiming to enjoy it, seemed somewhat bewildered by its intricacies: "because my sister knows who Ron is, what a leaflet is...". . Justin (N) commented: " I don't like reading on my own. Liam is my good friend. I like reading with him". And Arnold (R) clearly enjoyed entertaining his younger brother with stories "He laughs because I make funny voices".

For the most part, parent reading took place in the context of the bedtime routine and did not replace the routine of child reading to parent. But, this too emerged as a much more positive experience than it had done with the negative attitude group. Although regular reading was generally a compulsory activity[9], this aspect had generally not become a dominating feature. The boys tended to view the mother in a supportive role: "sometimes when I say what does that mean, she normally tells me" [Jed (R)]. "I read to her and if I get stuck on a word she'll tell me what they are" [Jeremy (N)]. "It's fun....if I get stuck she helps me" [Cameron (N)]. These were not generally struggling readers and the task of reading with them was probably easier than in the case of the boys within the poor reading attitude group. This may account for the better parent-child interactions; not surprisingly, most of the friction had arisen when children encountered problems. It is likely that the more positive parent-child reading interactions contributed to compounding the positive dimension of the boys' reading development among this group of boys in much the same way that negative interactions had undermined it.

11.6. Positive reading attitudes: summary and interpretation

As illustrated in tables 11.2 and 11.3, at age 7, boys in the positive attitude group were on the whole better readers than those in the poor attitude group. But reading ability was not by itself a satisfactory explanatory factor. Poor readers had also found a way to enjoy books, and their enjoyment offers some clues about the contributory factors.

[9] Only one child made no mention of his mother's involvement in reading. A year earlier this mother had told me she was quite ill and acknowledged she was unable to do very much with him.

As explored in the literature review (section 3.3) the interactions around reading have important implications for the development of the affective dimension of reading. These interactions can take place in a number of situations: reading of parent to child and child to parent, sharing books with other children, (friends and siblings), and reading books in a school context, being read to as well as reading independently. Spreadbury (Spreadbury, 1995) emphasised the unique contribution of parents in this area but also the potentially detrimental effect of entering school. She noted a marked decrease in interaction around reading, with children becoming far more passive. Her study observed but did not seek to explain this process.

Data from the boys' transcripts pointed to changes in parental concerns as children entered school which may well have contributed to the growing passivity of children noted by Spreadbury and estrangement from reading noted in this study. The boys' transcripts shed some light on this transition and the implication of parental involvement at this stage.

Early indications of these changes were discussed in chapter 8. The parental perspective is addressed in chapter 12. Two years later the school influence on parents had become even more entrenched, at best imposing a barrier on the activities carried out at home but at worst giving rise to hostile interaction between parent and son. The driving force, illustrated in the sub-sample described so far, but explored more comprehensively below, was the perceived need among both parents and teachers, to make children become independent readers. The repercussions were evident in the nature of interactions between parent and child as well as in the nature of their children's reading development. Because independent reading replaced reading to children, access to texts was highly restricted. The texts which children were able to read themselves were unlikely to stimulate their interest and yet data indicated that only one child in the negative attitude group had the opportunity of listening to age-appropriate texts. Among the positive attitude group there was more evidence of parents continuing to read to their children.

Child reading to adult was given a prominent position by the boys irrespective of their reading attitudes, spoken of far more frequently both in a school and a home context

than parent reading to child. In the poor attitude group, reading to parents had, in some cases, come to be felt not just as an imposition, but as a situation evoking frustration and anger in both parents and children. The contexts had in some cases given rise to inappropriate practices, led by inappropriate targets. Possibly, these parents had mediated more successfully between their children and the demands of school. Alternatively, the boys themselves had made the parental role easier to play. Most likely it was a mixture of the two. What became apparent without doubt was that the development of the attitudinal dimension of reading was anchored in these interactions. From these interactions, boys were acquiring not just reading skills but an experience of reading that determined how they felt about reading. The scrutiny of the two sub-samples of this study offered some vivid glimpses of the affective dimension of reading attitude in the context of their reading experiences. The following sections, incorporating the whole sample, analyses developments within the cognitive and behavioural dimensions of reading attitude. The analysis is situated within the context of the particular environment of the final term of Key Stage One. It describes the boys' perceptions of the role of others and discusses how these interactions have shaped and changed their understanding of the purpose of reading, gradually moulding fluid and often hazy concepts.

11.7. A functional perspective: boys' ideas about the purposes of reading at age seven

Analysis of the boys' transcripts at age five, six and seven showed a dwindling perception of reading as an activity carried out for the sake of enjoyment. At age seven, less than a third of the sample referred to the enjoyment factor (children who "like" reading) compared to almost the entire sample at age five. Excitement associated with reading was mentioned once and humour just three times. In contrast about a third (compared to just six boys the previous year) recognised reading as a way of finding out information, with one boy talking specifically about "current news" [Darren (N)]. Information books "tell you more about things" [Justin (N)]. There seemed to be some sort of relationship between the emergence of this understanding and the affective dimension of reading attitude. Eight out of twelve boys identified as those with positive attitudes expressed clear ideas about the distinct

function of non-fiction texts: "to find things out", "to know things". The boys in the poor attitude group were much vaguer although specific examples suggested the concepts were beginning to emerge: "it's because I like finding things out about things that happened when I wasn't alive" [Bruno (N)]; "Cos he wants to know about non-fiction stuff" [Kevin (N)].

Seven boys picked on the "relief from boredom" factor identified in Neuman's categorisation (Neuman, 1980). "If I'm bored I might go and read a story" [Matthew (R)]. A more far-sighted view of reading was extremely rare, with just one child linking reading to "a better job" [Jasper (N)]. More than half continued to associate reading with learning words and practising, a process which was viewed as compulsory and had therefore taken on its own raison d'etre: "it might be a reading book....we bring books home from school and we have to read them" [Cameron (N)].

11.8. The role of parents, peer group and teachers as viewed at age seven

The process of interacting with others while reading both reflected and influenced boys' ideas about the function of reading. Parents and teachers guided the frequency and the nature of these interactions.

The first photograph presented in these interviews showed two boys sharing a book. This prompted discussion about the type of contexts in which children continued to share books and why they might do so. About a quarter of the sample claimed never to share books with their peer group and three boys made no reference to such sharing. The reasons were generally not given although sadly Kenny (R) commented: "nobody ever wants to read with me". A further quarter qualified their sharing to something they did "sometimes". The rest of the sample had some experience of sharing books either in a structured way at school or with siblings at home. For the most part these peer group interactions with books were still embedded in an educational context as noted the previous year. The enjoyment factor was rarely mentioned and it was interesting to note that most of this handful of boys had been identified as holding very positive reading attitudes. Justin (N) who enjoyed reading

with his friend Liam and Arnold who liked to entertain his younger brother with stories were mentioned earlier. These were the exceptions. The idea predominantly associated with sharing books, whether relating to other children or their own experiences, was oriented to learning: "Because sometimes I get harder words and I ask them to help me with them" [Percy (R)]. "If you get stuck you don't have to call out for someone" [Richard (R)]. Sharing the books helps the boys "to learn" [Rowan (N)] and "so they can get better at doing it" [Simon (N)]. "One is reading and one is teaching him" [Rob (N)]. These themes echo ideas from the previous year. Reading is still perceived as a difficult process requiring help. The task of learning to read continues to dominate the peer group relationship at school among friends and even to touch sibling book sharing, although to a smaller degree.

This relationship may well have reflected the parent-child reading interactions which the boys observed around them. In interpreting the photograph of adult and child together sharing a book, the interpretation was almost always that of child reading to parent. Only fourteen boys out of the entire sample talked of stories still being read to them at home and these situations were often qualified: "she sometimes reads my library books" [Kevin (N)]. "I read to her first of all" [Derrick (N)].

The main interaction was still that of child reading to parent and the main purpose was still the acquisition of reading skills, "reading proficiency". Again just a handful did it "for fun", "cos I like to" [Jack (N)]. Mostly the reading took place in response to parental demands, where the parent's role replicated that of teacher. Parents were believed to be monitoring progress: "so my dad knows how much I have been reading" [Percy (R)], to be teaching: "helps you get better at reading" [Collin (N)], "so I can go up to a different level at school" [Billy (N)] and to offer practice time. Richard (R) thought his mother read with him because "it keeps me quiet". Only one boy mentioned longer-term aims of reading with a parent: "because if you're grown-up and learned how to drive you wouldn't know what the signs said" [Harry (R)].

The pervasive nature of the 'proficiency' target in the boys' concepts about reading suggested a strong triadic relationship between pupils, parents and teachers with school reading lying at the heart of their experience. The teacher role affected pupils

indirectly via the demands exerted on parents and directly through the demands made on the pupils themselves.

The boys in this sample recognised and cited two common school reading situations. First reading in a group situation, a daily routine defined as 'guided reading' established within the framework of the literacy hour. Secondly the teacher's story time, a routine widely adopted at the end of the school day or between periods of work but not regulated in the same way.

As might be expected almost all references to the former were associated with learning to read, improving standards of reading and practising reading: "to help the children read" [Tim (N)]. The focus remained firmly directly on decoding words with the teacher's role and the other children's role confined almost entirely to this deciphering. A number of boys preferred group reading to individual reading because of the peer group support they gained. Two boys thought it was a way of teachers not having to spend so much time on listening to individual children, "you get through reading much more quicker" [Jasper (N)]. In general the teacher's role was portrayed as a passive one, monitoring and supporting: "helping them with the words" [Dominic (N)]; "if they get stuck on a word the teacher says it" [Tim (N)]. "She just listens and if you get one of the words wrong she tries to help you to spell it out" [Darren (N)].

An analysis of how boys viewed the guided reading sessions revealed little evidence of teachers' concern with the motivational aspect of reading or indeed any aspect of reading outside the framework of proficiency. Given the centrality of these group sessions as a feature of the literacy hour, these findings evoke similar concerns to those suggested in the small study by Hanke cited earlier (Hanke, 2000).

Analysis of boys' perceptions of story time at school did little to allay these concerns. Just as parents seemed generally to fail as vehicles of access to a wide range of literature as yet beyond the reach of the boys' technical abilities, so too teachers did little to compensate. In this, parents perhaps were a mirror of teacher behaviour. Story time at school, although experienced widely, was restricted to well-defined and limited sessions. They did not form an integral part of children's literacy experience

in the sense that they took place as 'breathers'. Often they were treated as a reward for hard work "we deserve something for trying really hard" [Zak (R)] or even to give the teacher a break: "to keep us going till it's home time..to have some peace I think" [Jed (R)]. These sessions were positively viewed: "she does it for us to be happy" [Kenny (R)], "so they don't get bored" [Percy (R)]. However the potential motivational benefits remained unexploited. Just as story time at home was confined to bed-time stories, so story time at school was confined to sessions when the children were most likely to be tired, at the end of the day or having completed a 'work' task. Like a special treat, stories were handed out sparingly.

11.9. Knowledge and perceptions of genre

The emphasis on reading proficiency was reflected in the way the boys talked about books. The concept of the "reading book" was expressed by almost half the sample with eleven children making specific mention of the Oxford Reading Tree or its main characters, Biff and Chip. It was interesting to note that the boys in the positive attitude group gave the reading book far less prominence. Only one boy, Arnold (R), referred to specific reading schemes, mentioning both The Oxford Reading Tree and Roger Red Hat. Arnold had mentioned Roger Red-Hat the previous year as the story being read by the teacher.

The reading book had retained the notion of progression as one of its prime characteristics: "so we can finish it and go on to the next class" [Alan (N)]. Boys seemed to have an intimate knowledge of the type of progression found in the reading schemes: "light green is just small letters and then the dark green would be a bit high" [Dennis (N)]. Sammy (N), almost a non-reader, knew his way around an intricate coding system: "gold star and double gold star...double white triangle". For some the notion of coding had replaced that of content so when asked what some children might be reading Saul replied "a green book". Another in response to a similar query replied "like, what level?"

In contrast the ability to talk about specific children's books was quite limited. Just nine boys referred to Harry Potter and seven others to a selection of Roald Dahl titles.

One of these boys also mentioned an Enid Blyton title. About a quarter of the sample were unable to cite a fiction book by name in spite of a range of stimuli and extensive discussion exploring their reading experiences. A few well-known picture books were mentioned, usually because some class work was being or had recently been carried out relating to the titles. For this reason two boys from one school mentioned Katy Morag and two boys from another school talked about One-eyed Jake. Mr Men books, Disney titles, a few fairy tales made up for most of the rest.

Awareness of genre was beginning to develop. The analysis of these transcripts pointed to a growing awareness of 'information' or 'non-fiction' books. About half the sample employed this terminology although not always accompanied by an understanding of its function and occasionally the terms fiction and non-fiction were incorrectly interchanged. Although for some non-fiction was tied to school based-work such as the study of rainforests, for many interest in non-fiction extended beyond the classroom. In this category, books about dinosaurs remained a firm favourite with a third of the sample talking about them.

Familiarity with comic titles was also widespread with almost half the sample able to mention at least one comic title. Interestingly, many did not read them themselves but had siblings who did so. Very few were able to explain the difference between comics and books with most just talking about the obvious physical differences: "comics can rip easily" [Jeremy(N)]. However, understanding of this genre was also growing. Whereas a year earlier only one boy had mentioned 'speech bubbles' as a distinctive feature of comics, now eight boys did so.

The growing knowledge of genre and familiarity with titles accompanied the growth of the children and was therefore not surprising. Nevertheless, the knowledge and understanding as reflected in this analysis remained firmly embedded in a school framework, which influenced attitude in its three dimensions. Boys' reading activities and reading material were primarily school-related so that attitude was harnessed to a didactic concept of reading, with reading proficiency as the main target and driving force.

11.10. Summary : boys' perceptions of reading at the end of Key Stage One.

In contrast to the general trend of educational priorities, the data analysed in this chapter set out not to measure but to explore. It attempted to put forward the "voice of the stakeholders" (Anning, 1998 p.301) and so to foster our understanding of the less well-observed process of children's reading development, the way they learn to think and feel about reading.

The analysis at the end of Key Stage One portrayed a reading world which had remained disappointingly static since the previous year. As one might expect there was a growth of understanding of genre and function but within the very limited parameters described. Similarly, one noted some growth in familiarity with children's books and other forms of writing but again within highly restricted boundaries. Given the abundance of children's literature available to these children (all children had access to a school library and many visited local libraries as well), the range of books with which they showed real familiarity was extremely narrow.

To understand these boys' encounters with reading, the context of their school environment becomes critical. In recent years, the perceived need for standards and measurement have dominated all aspects of the school curriculum. Reading, like other subjects, has been subject to constant monitoring and assessment with the acquisition of reading skills at the very heart of the process. As a result achievement and the progression which paves its way have become the central feature of children's reading worlds. This was re-iterated in the data time and again and characterised the majority of reading contexts. Progression through books seemed for the most part to displace immersion in books so that fiction books tended to be remembered by colour codes and/or numbered level (according to difficulty) not by title or subject.

These objectives had varied repercussions on the boys' reading, changing not just the type of reading activity, but, more importantly for some, the character of the interaction. In school and at home these interactions, as perceived by the boys in this sample, focussed almost exclusively on improvement and practice at the expense of enjoyment or other functions of reading. Parental and teacher interest as judged by the

boys, lay in the skills rather than in the content. The need to see results, 'reading homework' and inevitable peer group comparison brought an intensity to the interactions which brewed unhelpful frustration among both the boys and the adults around them.

These interactions played a key role in determining the boys' attitudes towards reading, whether in the affective domain, the cognitive understanding of function or in the behavioural domain of book choice and reading patterns. They yielded often indifferent, and sometimes detrimental outcomes. The intensity of these interactions, especially with parents, was widely reflected in the analysis of these transcripts. They resulted in a number of casualties of which Alex was perhaps the most vivid example. His negative attitudes which had emerged in the Reception class were firmly entrenched by the end of Key Stage One.

These findings did not reflect the far wider objectives of the National Literacy Strategy, which set out to enhance children's enjoyment of reading and give them a broad experience of literacy, as well as to raise standards. This would seem to concur with the discrepancy found by Fisher (Fisher, 2002) between the perception of teachers about changes in their teaching style and actual changes. The complex process of teaching is "not easily altered" (Fisher, 2002 p.168) and it would seem that teachers grasped and conveyed the technical aspects of literacy far more successfully than its less skills-based dimension. Boys' perception of reading was dominated by the idea of skills acquisition and their concept of progress, mirroring the drive for standards which lay behind the Strategy. Given that the success of the NLS would be judged on the strength of quantitative measures of achievement, it was not surprising that this concern was transmitted to the pupils by the teachers. The quick pace of the literacy hour sessions contributed still further to narrowing the focus. "Only a few teachers used questions to challenge and extend children's thinking" (Fisher, 2002 p.168). The classroom interaction was highly controlled by the teacher which according to Fisher "may have been to the detriment of creative or divergent thinking" (ibid. p.168). The findings from this study would seem to lend support to this assessment.

The data would suggest that school had unwittingly set boundaries to the development of many children's reading through its strong focus on the acquisition of reading skills and reading independence. This priority affected the role of parents by restricting the type of reading activities they engaged in with their children. Whereas prior to formal school most were reading to their young children, the commencement of school encouraged them to focus on their children's reading. Across the sample this was not just the most frequently described reading context but the one which the boys perceived adults to value most highly. The void created was not satisfactorily filled at school where story time continued to be viewed as a treat, slotted in at the end of a long day or perhaps after the completion of a piece of work. In terms of the hierarchy of importance of reading activities, listening to stories was low ranking.

These boys' voices did not give evidence in favour of those who argue that these early years give children a 'head start'. The priority attached to learning to read, encouraged by early entry to formal school and the culture of assessment, provided a centrifugal force towards which parents, teachers and pupils have been inevitably drawn, impoverishing rather than enriching their reading interactions with these young boys.

CHAPTER 12

RECEPTION OR NURSERY CLASS: PARENTAL PERSPECTIVES

12.1. Summary of background

The controversy surrounding the issue of age of admission to school was discussed in some detail in the pages of the literature review (chapter 2). The government drive for "standards" within a framework of targets and assessment has come into conflict with a more child-centred view of early years education and has engendered an anxious and somewhat sceptical public debate. The Sunday Telegraph reflected concern about both the rigidity and inappropriate nature of government demands: "We will soon have a curriculum for newborn babies" (Betham, 1999). A similar perspective was adopted by Catherine Lockwood writing in The Times: "Many children in Britain are barely out of nappies before they are expected to start learning their letters" (Lockwood, 1999). Her article revisited many of the arguments surrounding the debate:

i Children in Europe commence school up to three years later than children in the United Kingdom, but by the end of primary school are no less competent in terms of their academic skills

ii A formal approach to early years education can be harmful to children's development by allowing children to experience early failure

iii Children need time to "explore the world at their own pace" (Lockwood, 1999)

iv Demands for conformity and obedience at the age of four and five are inappropriate and can lead to a "normal" child being judged as naughty or difficult. The natural exuberance of young children is curbed instead of being nourished

v Children in the United Kingdom may "endure several frustrating terms at school" struggling to master academic skills for which they are simply not ready

These arguments reflect the research questions guiding this study. Data drawn from a sample of boys over a two-year period has scrutinised their reading development from the viewpoint of the child. In addition, various standardised measures have offered a more objective set of standards through which to view the process. This final section of the study (chapters 12-14) looked at these early years through the eyes of parents, contributing a third equally important perspective.

Politically motivated judgements about early years education have tended to look towards traditional 'test' results to judge the performance of pre-school children. Concepts such as base-line assessment have offered a supposedly standardised and unbiased picture of how children have fared in those critical years prior to 'official' school entry. Such measures, however, contribute very little to our understanding of these early years, for they reveal nothing about the living process of school and home experience or their intricate fusion. This study has attempted to supplement the bland conclusions we can draw from 'outcomes' by viewing the process through parental eyes. Parental assessment of both Reception and Nursery class education is derived from both child-related and curriculum-related issues. It is affected partly by the experiences of their own child or children but also by less concrete experiences, which seemed to have their roots in various external sources overtly acknowledged or otherwise. Data drawn from 59 interviews confirmed parents as keen observers of a process whose immediate impact they, more than any one else, are in a position to describe. These descriptions, never indifferent and frequently highly emotive, offered vivid snapshots, which this chapter has attempted both to present and evaluate.

The analysis of parent interview data addressed itself to these questions:

i How did parents assess Reception versus Nursery class education?

ii Did these views reflect their own sons' response to Reception/Nursery class education?

iii How did parents view the transition to Year One?

iv What views did parents express about the value of early versus late entry to school?

v How did parents view their son's reading development?

vi Did the data suggest any patterns in parental views according to whether the boys had experienced Reception or Nursery class education?

12.2. The sample and data

The criteria and rationale which governed the sample selection have been presented in chapter 6. Twenty eight parents[10] had their son in Reception classes, 32 in Nursery classes. Interviews were conducted with one or both parents of all except one boy [Boris (N)] participating in the study, where repeated attempts at contacting the mother failed to elicit a response. The interviews were semi-structured and lasted about an hour. All except one interview was held in the parental home. One mother decided she would prefer the interview to be held in my home. The interviews were recorded and later transcribed.

The interview schedule sought three major categories of data:

i. Descriptive data about the boy, including information about the child's reading development

ii. Information about the boy's reading environment in terms of both school and home

iii. Parental beliefs about early years education and about the parental role within this phase

The interviews elicited some quantitative data, also described in the pilot study, including responses to a questionnaire given to the parents at the time of interview (appendix 3, section B). Analysis of this quantitative data showed that there were few group differences on the range of measures designed to portray home literacy environments (see Chapter 7.5.2)

[10] One mother had twins, hence 29 boys but 28 parents in the sample

12.3. The structure of analysis

The analysis of the interview data focused on comparing patterns of experiences and beliefs between the two groups, which defined the sample of boys. The qualitative analysis attempted to enhance our understanding of some of the processes occurring at home and at school which differentiated these two groups.

Tesch identified four categories of qualitative research ranging from a highly structured approach which can be likened to quantitative analysis, to an extremely fluid undefined system she termed 'reflection'. The present analysis falls toward the structured end of the range reflecting research which in Tesch's terminology seeks 'the discovery of regularities' and entails "the identification and categorisation of elements and the establishment of their connections and "the identification of patterns" (Tesch, 1992 p.78). The analytic methodology employed was strongly influenced by Miles and Huberman (Miles & Huberman, 1994). This approach encompassed a range of methods for "collecting, sorting, displaying and comprehending data" (Tesch, 1992 p.86). The interview transcripts were coded using an empirically driven methodology. A line by line examination of the first four transcripts generated the first working coding structure. This structure was adopted for both groups in the study but was subject to constant refinement and development guided by the focus of the research questions and their interconnections. The structure and definitions presented in appendix 8 section A were generated using the software programme QSR Nud*ist developed during the course of analysing the 59 transcripts. The definition of the coding categories is presented in Appendix 8, figures 1-4

Following the development of a general but fluid coding structure, subsequent analyses focused on specific research questions and their interconnections. These questions guided the analytic steps while the mechanics of analysis primarily reflect the methodology of Miles and Huberman (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

The initial coding of interviews created a bank of data relating to the research questions. According to the terminology employed by Tesch the data was "de-

contextualized"; text units were coded with the use of Nudist. These text units were then re-contextualized creating five categories displayed in the form of a matrix (Appendix 8, table A.10.1):

i Parental assessment of their own child

ii Parental views on later entry to school

iii Parental views on transition to Year One

iv Child's response to Nursery or Reception

v Child's literacy development as viewed by parent

These reflected the dominating themes of the transcripts and provided the framework for a between-group comparison. The views of parents whose boys had had Reception class experience were compared to the view of parents whose boys had had Nursery class experience prior to entry into Year One. At a more complex level the analysis sought to explain how parental beliefs generated or were generated by the literacy environment of school and home. These inter-relationships are summarised in figure 12.1.

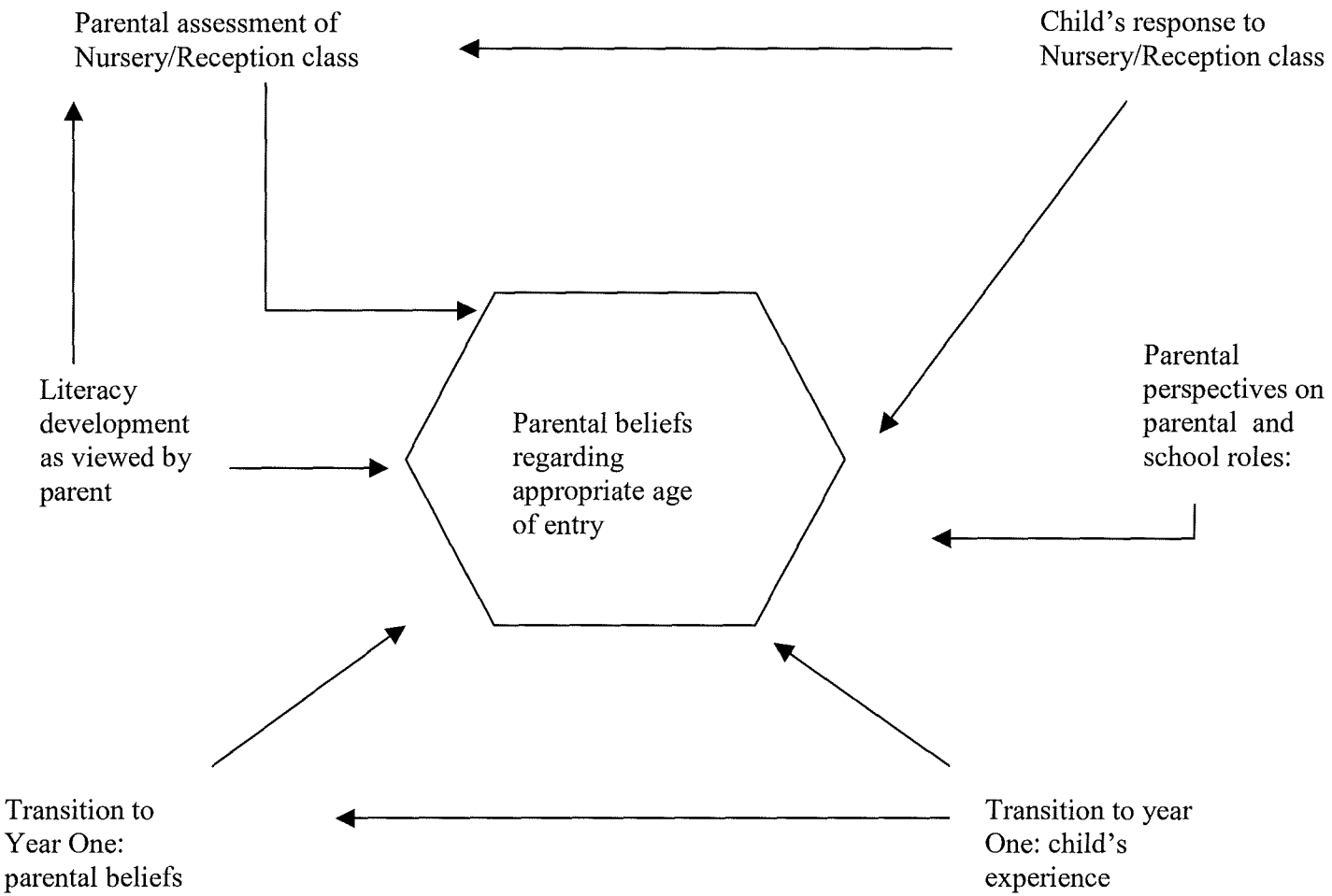

Figure 12.1 Structure of analysis of interview data tracing relationships between parental beliefs about and experiences of early educational settings

12.4. Child-related observations

The starting point for this analysis lay in the observation that the vast majority of parents whose children were or had been in Nursery class education prior to entry to Year One expressed themselves as "happy" or "very happy" with their child's experience. This satisfaction lay in stark contrast to the much more ambivalent feelings expressed by those parents whose children had had to enter a Reception class in the same period.

The same expressions were re-iterated time and again as parents gave their view of the nursery: "I'm happy", "It seemed really good", "I think it's lovely", "The mixture there is just brilliant" and "I think they are fantastic there, really fantastic". Although experiences reflected eight separate nurseries, feelings were overwhelmingly positive, with only five parents mentioning anything but complete satisfaction. Clearly the direct experience of children enjoying the experience of Nursery was a key factor in parental satisfaction. Only one parent alluded to any sort of problem in relation to their child attending Nursery. In this case the child occasionally complained that no-one would play with him. But even here the mother felt that the child was generally well-settled and his occasional reluctance to go was attributed to tiredness. For the rest, the few parental reservations expressed did not arise from child-related problems. Most felt that their child had "loved" the Nursery. The children were positively enthused: "Even when he's been sick, sometimes he's cried because he's wanted to go to Nursery" claimed Rob's mother, while Justin's mother spoke of him "fighting to get in".

A very different picture emerged from interviews with Reception class parents where parental assessment was much less uniform. Feelings about the Reception class experience were generally far more ambivalent. Only three parents wholeheartedly endorsed the experience of Reception class in terminology comparable to that cited when parents spoke of Nursery classes. Two of these parents had children in the same Reception class and both commented: "I'd recommend it to anyone".

For the majority, ambivalence about Reception class education arose from problems parents felt had arisen with their own children in this educational setting. Many believed that their child was too young to meet the demands being made: "He started school at just four and a half and he was beside himself coming out of school" (Alex's mother). This sentiment was widely echoed. Half the sample of parents in this group referred to problems associated with age, implying a mismatch between the child's chronological age and the educational setting in which he found himself. This mismatch manifested itself in a number of ways. Many concurred with the view that was expressed by Frank's mother: "I think it has been quite a struggle and a strain for him". Full day school with a rigid structure made many of the children unmanageably tired. In contrast tiredness was mentioned only twice among the Nursery class group parents. One of these mentions was in relation to full-time Nursery, experienced for one term only, by three children in the sample. Among Reception class parents it was a recurrent theme. Deterioration in home behaviour was noted by several parents and was mainly attributed to tiredness. In one case this led the child to do "destructive things", as Darryl's mother explained: "he gets quite frustrated, he gets very, very tired". Another mother had developed an uneasy relationship with school as a result of their implied criticism of the child's aggression. According to the mother her child had become very aggressive since entering Reception. He had had a period of wetting his bed and his mother was at a loss as to how to deal with him. In yet another case the child had become "miserable" as a result of being over-tired and unable to "switch off" from his school work. The mother of twins, Kenny and Zak, felt that the Reception class was making both her boys very tired which "creates a lot of tension".

A whole day within a structured environment is probably sufficient explanation for the degree of tiredness experienced by so many of these boys. Among parents, it was seen as a significant physical manifestation of a problem they generally believed was caused by placing children too early in the Reception class environment. The physical demands of a whole day in school were compounded by the seemingly unrelenting demands on children to concentrate. Time and again parents reported that their children did not want to sit still and accomplish set tasks: "He won't sit down and

concentrate," (Hideo's mother). "He would get put off quickly if he couldn't understand what he was doing or he found it a bit hard, he'd say well I don't want to do that anymore," (Arnold's mother) In Michael's words: "I don't want to do hard work, I want to play." As a result many of these children viewed school initially as a curtailment of their freedom. Teacher demands impinged on the activities they wished to pursue: "He really didn't want to do them. He'd got to." (William's mother) "He walks in sometimes and you can hear him take a deep breath, 'now this is it and I have to conform'" (Frank's mother). While most parents reported that in spite of these problems their children were happy to go to school, for a few, school had become almost an ordeal. The feelings of six different children are reflected in these comments: "Within a week they hated it"; "The teacher shouts and I have to sit and do my work"; "He was very frightened"; "He wants to leave it behind."

While these feelings varied in their intensity and individual impact, they were not isolated responses but recurrent themes occurring in over twenty of the twenty-eight interviews held. Concepts such as "resistance" "struggling" and "conforming" were common in this set of transcripts but totally absent in the language of parents whose boys, aged four, remained in a Nursery environment.

These responses must be set in the context of the significant events taking place in schools at this time. 1998 saw the introduction of the National Literacy Strategy. Reception class teachers faced the shared problems associated with the introduction of this radical new initiative with the specific dilemmas of applying it to such young pupils. Fisher's study highlighted the difficulties faced by these teachers in meeting the needs of the four-year-olds (Fisher, 2002). The activities demanded by the literacy hour were not necessarily developmentally appropriate and curtailed opportunities for play. Activities carried out during the guided/independent time were frequently supervised by assistants rather than teachers and were most commonly adult-led paper and pencil tasks. Child-centred or play activities were rarely observed during the literacy hour although of course they may have occurred at other times during the day. The experiences of this sample of boys reflect common problems of the literacy hour in the Reception class and the dangers inherent in the imposition of a strategy devised

essentially for older children. As Fisher concluded: " it is difficult to create a developmentally appropriate environment in a standard literacy hour" (Fisher, 2002 p.149). The contrast between the responses of Reception and Nursery class boys gave vivid evidence of this difficulty.

12.5. Classroom-related observations

As noted earlier the vast majority of parents whose children attended a Nursery class prior to entering school were satisfied with the experience. This derived in part from the parents' belief that the children were happy, but was complemented by satisfaction with the educational dimension of Nursery education. For many, expectations were more than met: "He's managed to achieve everything I'd expect out of him" (Billy's mother), "They do everything there really" (Sammy's mother), "They are learning something new every day they are there" (Peter's mother). A small number had reservations about the academic development of children in Nursery. Two parents expressed disappointment , "I thought it would be more advanced than what it was" (Neil's mother), "Everything in Nursery revolved around play, almost too much to my mind" (Jasper's mother). On the whole criticism was minimal with just one or two who felt that a little bit more academic work could have been introduced at an earlier stage in the Nursery.

Ambivalence about the education provided in Reception shared some of the same features. In spite of the much more rigid structure of Reception one parent suggested that the emphasis should have been less on play and more on sitting down. Elsewhere a parent commented that children entering in September should have had more "persuasion and coaching" (Gabriel's mother).

In contrast to the generally positive appraisal of Nursery, several parents of Reception class children reflected the views demonstrated by the comment, "I suppose you want their potential to be achieved and I would say it is not being" (Arthur's mother). Class size and the lack of individuality which this entailed were generally cited as the

reasons for these failures. "We weren't supported. I think he just floundered really" (William's mother).

12.6. Parental judgements about boys' progress

Reading and writing skills were the prime yardsticks adopted by parents in judging the academic achievement of their children. The interviews sought to explore how parents viewed their own boys' literacy development. Did the greater satisfaction of parents with boys in Nursery class also apply to their appraisal of literacy skills? If so, were expectations of this group of boys less high or was the Nursery class setting providing a better environment for the progression of these skills?

Parental satisfaction with the boys' literacy development was identified in both groups as a majority response but was more extensively qualified among parents of Reception class boys. In this group only nine parents who expressed complete satisfaction with both the reading and writing of their boys, also felt that their boys had encountered no problems along the way. Two parents felt disappointed with the school, in the one case criticising the lack of early help available and in the other suggesting the school was placing too many demands on the child. The rest expressed their reservations in various ways. The boys were:

i Struggling

ii Behind their peers

iii In need of extra help

iv Held negative attitudes and were reluctant to do literacy-related tasks

v Had no long-term benefit from the reading they had covered in their first year

vi Parents wanted a greater school input into reading

Table 12.1 illustrates how these six reservations were spread among the sample of parents. Each number refers to a parent in the sample.

i		ii		ii		iv		v		vi	
R	N	R	N	R	N	R	N	R	N	R	N
28	29	2	18	1	57	32		8		28	6
33	57	40		11	58			31		34	10
34		44		34						32	29
35		49[11]		35						30	48
55				44							
56				51							

Table 12.1 A summary of parental concerns about boys' literacy development

R Parent of Reception class child

N Parent of Nursery class child

Even a cursory glance showed a marked difference between the way parents viewed their child's literacy development depending on the child's early years experience. Over half of the boys who experienced Reception class were thought to be struggling, behind their peers or in need of extra help compared to only four in Nursery.

The data also suggested that most parents were satisfied with the 'school' role in teaching literacy in both early years settings. Criticism was levelled by a small minority of parents and was not more pronounced in either group.

[11] Referring to both twins

12.7. Parental beliefs regarding appropriate age of entry to school

During the course of the interviews it became apparent that views about Nursery or Reception class education, though rooted in concrete experience, also reflected a broader perspective of early years education, which encompassed and influenced beliefs about appropriate age of entry to school. Parents' individual expectations of their children, of early years educational settings and beliefs about their own role in the education of their young children, formed a conceptual perspective which was not necessarily tied to the actual experience of early years education met by their children.

This section explores to what extent views about age of entry to school reflected the 'concrete' experiences of children as described by parents or alternatively how far they were embedded independently in more general theoretical ideas about early years education.

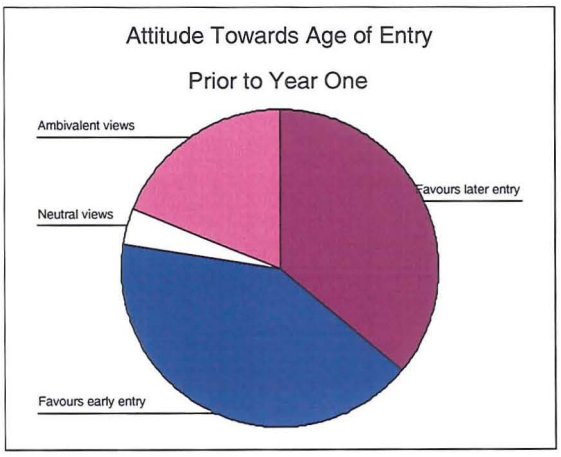

Figure 12.2 Parental attitudes toward age of entry to school

Just under half of the sample of parents interviewed felt positively towards a system where children entered school prior to the statutory age of five, as illustrated in figure 12.2. In this group of 24 parents, 14 had had children in school from the age of four plus, while 10 would have preferred this option but lived in boroughs which adhered

to the statutory age of admission. The distribution of views is illustrated in figure 12.3.

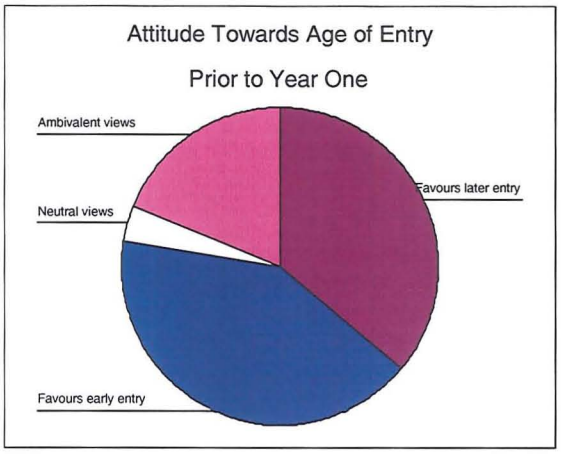

Figure 12.3 Group comparison of parental attitudes toward age of entry to school

Within the Nursery group the arguments related mainly to feelings that children were somehow missing out and that Reception class children were "“better off". These feelings were linked to concerns about how children with up to a year's less schooling could catch up in terms of their academic work. A number of parents also felt that the home environment could not provide enough stimulation where attendance at Nursery was only for two and a half hours and that consequently the children were becoming "bored".

Only Alan's mother attributed the child's loss of interest directly to the Nursery environment. She suggested that Alan needed not only the extra hours but that he should be sitting down "rather than be allowed to run round in the playground playing with his friends." Among parents of children in the Reception class the arguments in favour of early entry centred mainly on the belief that children needed to start "learning." For these parents educational development was defined in purely academic terms: "proper work" (Ricki's mother), "sitting down and actually achieving something" (Graham's mother). Three of these parents felt their children were "ready" for the greater demands of Reception class, "My view is Nursery would not have been stretching enough for him" (Harry's mother). Only one parent linked

her satisfaction with the system of early entry to the child's very happy experience without trying to justify it on educational grounds.

Parents favouring a later entry were also found in both groups but were more evident in the Nursery class group where children had had this experience. There was a widespread feeling that children younger than about five were simply too young for the formality of Reception class education. "He's a baby " (Frank's mother). "I would have given anything for him to have started school in September[12]..it would have given him time to develop that little bit more and he would have had more time to play and interact with other children" (Richard's mother). Three Nursery class parents mentioned that their children were ready around the time of or soon after their fifth birthdays and not before. Most parents with children in Nursery until five felt it was a better environment, providing opportunities to play and a good staff-pupil ratio. Parents of children in Reception class regretted the absence of these very things: "I thought there would be quite a bit more play" (Jonathan's mother). She expressed doubt about the academic value of that extra year, "you know he has learned from Reception but it's how much more he'll learn this year."

As illustrated quantitatively in figure 12.2, many parents remained unsure about the issue. For some the ambivalence arose from the discrepancy between their child's experience and their own beliefs. Alex's mother advocated an annual intake at the age of four, while commenting that full-time school would have been far too much for him to cope with: "he couldn't have handled it, no way." For others it was a degree of dissatisfaction with both systems that led to ambivalence. Many felt that Reception class leapt prematurely into the formality of compulsory school while Nursery class was lacking in structured learning. Yet others were influenced by the fear that their children would fall behind, "He'll have to work that extra bit hard in order to catch up" (Dan's mother). This particular concern was reflected in some parents' reservations about how their children would cope with the demands of Year One.

[12] the child would have been 5 plus

Whilst most Nursery class parents foresaw the change to full-time as the major demand of Year One only three expressed significant concern about how their children would cope with this. Six parents felt that the transition to Year One was too sudden and foresaw problems arising from the dual demand of full-time school and academic pressures. "I think it's going to be a shock to him to have to sit down all day and work, work, work" (Jasper's mother). These parents all shared a desire for a transitional period such as they believed would have been provided by a Reception class. Only two parents made reference to potential problems of competition with those children who had had the "advantage" of extra schooling.

Among the majority, problems associated with Year One were not a major issue. However they did seem to contribute to how parents felt about the issue of age of entry to school. Of eleven Nursery class parents who expressed concerns abut Year One, three continued to believe that children should not begin school prior to the statutory age. However, a further three were in favour of commencing school sooner and the rest remained somewhat ambivalent.

The concerns of Reception class parents in relation to Year One were not radically different. There was a shared belief that Year One would not allow for much playtime and that the academic demands would increase significantly; work would be much "tougher" "stressful" and "tiring". Harry's mother was already worrying about the work they might be set, "they're in for quite a big shock". "He's got to really get on with it now because he'll be pushed" was the comment of Amit's mother. Reception class preparation seemed to have done little to alleviate concerns. As among Nursery class parents, about a third of the sample felt the work would be significantly harder in Year One. The thought was expressed by a couple of parents that children would have forgotten much during the long summer break. Two parents were already contemplating the possibility of extra tuition for their children. Yet among these parents only two would have favoured a later entry to school. There was a strong belief that it was necessary for children to have an early introduction to formal education although in practice such an introduction did nothing to alleviate parental

concerns about Year One. These concerns were addressed in a questionnaire sent to all parents at the end of Year One. The findings are presented in chapter 13.

12.8. Parental expectations of their children's literacy development

Parental expectations form an integral part of the context in which children's reading development occurs, their skills develop and their attitudes take shape. These expectations are implicit in parental views about appropriate age of entry to school and they reflect fundamentally differing notions about early years education. A full description of these expectations provides the essential background for understanding this reading development takes place.

A substantial number of parents in both groups believed in the advantages of early entry to school. An equally substantial but less evenly distributed number expressed the opposite belief. As demonstrated earlier some of their arguments arose directly from the experience of their children but there was no simple causal relationship. So, for instance, the fact that boys had responded poorly to the demands of Reception class education did not necessarily mean that parents were led to believe in the advantages of a later entry to school.

It is beyond the scope of this small study to unravel the complex network of causal relationships governing these beliefs. Instead, it scrutinises the data to try to establish what literacy-related beliefs lay behind the differing views about appropriate age of entry, drawing inter-group comparisons wherever possible. Were academic expectations generally higher among parents of children in the Reception class? Were there differences in the way parents spoke of their children's reading and writing skills depending on whether children were in Nursery or Reception classes? Did parental involvement in children's literacy development appear to be driven by the demands of school?

Contemporary ideology has given literacy a prominent place in the early years. The teaching of literacy skills is embodied in the Foundation Stage and has naturally become an important criterion for measuring the success or failure of pre-school settings. Research has suggested that Reception classes have tended to adopt more formal methods, seeing themselves as an important link to Key Stage One rather than a separate educational entity (see section 2.7.). The short Nursery day, normally two and a half hours, curtailed the opportunities for a similar input into literacy skills, an issue consistently reflected in the parental interviews. The question addressed here is to what extent did the parent body share the literacy-related goals of the Foundation Stage and was there an association between the importance attributed to these goals and parental beliefs about appropriate age of entry to school? The interviews explored parental expectations about early years education and to what extent their expectations had been met by the available provision.

Parents across the sample saw literacy as a core of the early years curriculum. Whether the children had been in Nursery or Reception classes prior to Year One the vast majority expected at the very least an introduction to the 3Rs. There was of course a range in the intensity of parental concern about their children's literacy skills. Some parents had expected children to be introduced to reading and writing even prior to entry into Reception class. Several children had attended private Nurseries before entering Reception or school-attached Nursery classes. Arnold's mother conceded that her child had enjoyed the activities on offer in the Nursery which he had attended at the age of three but that he had been unable to sit still and concentrate: "I expected the Nursery to do a bit more with reading and writing". Arthur's mother reflecting on her motives in sending her son to Nursery at the same stage admitted: "I was thinking more on the educational side ... I was really thinking of him coming out of the Nursery with a few things under his belt reading-wise ..... It was important that he learned how to learn."

By the time children were aged four well over half of all parents viewed literacy as the single most important priority in terms of educational objectives. Parents were normally quite clear about their expectations. Reception class parents: "I would

expect them to be introducing him to the basics of reading and writing ... Nursery would not have been stretching enough for him"; "First and foremost I wanted him to learn to read"; "He needs to learn to read and he needs to learn to write". Nursery class parents: "I wanted to make sure he knew all his letters before he went to school....to make sure as well that he'd got somewhere with his reading books"; "It gets them ready for the school system and what have you, mainly the reading books"; "obviously getting numerate, getting to know words, numbers, letters"; "I think it's a good idea to start them fairly young to get them into that routine of being able to sit down and study".

The rationale for this emphasis lay mainly in an over-riding parental concern about adequate preparation for what was to come. Parents' views seemed to substantiate the claim made by Bredekamp and quoted earlier in the literature review that concerned adults often "apply adult educational standards to the curriculum for young children" (Bredekamp, 1991 p.51). There was a constant demand for "structure", "discipline" and a demand for children to "sit down and concentrate". Some acknowledged that such motivations were driven by external pressure. Henry's mother referred to the pressure of SATs: "they have to start now (ie in Reception class) to get it in". Others were less explicit but shared the same feelings. Among most there was an underlying anxiety that the child might fall behind and be disadvantaged over the long-term. Neil's mother wanted him to "to get ahead before he goes full-time". Bruno's mother was worried that he would miss out a whole year of schooling by going from Nursery straight into Year One, "Because of this four-plus system I was very keen to introduce him to reading and writing". But she admitted "we got nowhere....I've changed my mind". Others were motivated by the belief that the child was becoming bored; reading and writing were seen as an intellectual challenge which would stimulate and challenge. A few admitted they were motivated by the satisfaction of seeing their child 'achieve'. There was even an element of peer pressure. One mother acknowledged that she would have liked to be able to compare her child's standard of reading more favourably among her neighbours.

For the most part parental objectives reflected only a narrow element of the Foundation Stage objectives that could be easily measured and compared. Even those theoretically aware of different rationales for early years education were influenced by the driving pressure towards the acquisition of literacy skills. Oscar's mother commented: "to begin with they played a bit too much but I suppose that's the purpose of Nursery really, rather than teaching them academic things .... to be able to play with other children, and learn to share" but then added: "I think they spent a bit too much time playing." A very similar response was given by Dan's mother. She felt that children in Nursery should "get accustomed to other children, to share things with them, to learn, help him learn how to write his name, understand the a.b.c. Just being able to interact with other people really." This response was then qualified by the comment that these objectives were more suitable for younger children. Such comments endorse the argument expressed in the RSA report (Ball, 1994) that the importance of early years education is diminished in countries where formal education commences at the age of five. The views of parents would seem to suggest that there is no time for these child-oriented dimensions of education. Although clearly all parents wanted their children to have a happy experience of Nursery and school, most were ambivalent. The tensions were illustrated by Dominic's parents. His father argued for Reception class education to "stretch' his child, while the mother wanted him "to get settled" "to be happy at school" and felt that "too many expectations would put him off". Martin's mother argued "I want them to have a bigger, wider view, art, play and I think there is time for education". Yet a few moments later she said: "Nursery is only toys, he couldn't do anything in Nursery".

Even among the twenty or so parents where literacy was not mentioned specifically, targets were very much school rather than child-oriented. Many felt that Reception or Nursery class should be gearing children towards the formality of school: "I want him to settle down a little"; "A touch of discipline;" "I think it is a preparation for school, sitting still, and listening and responding to instructions"; "I wanted him to come home thinking that he went to school to learn not run around in the playground".

The interviews were striking for their lack of reference to traditional pre-school activities. Only one mother referred to the importance of the imaginative play corner and opportunities for the development of children's imagination were very low on the agenda of priorities. Only a few parents enthused about the range of activities on offer or recognised the value of informal activities. Only a tiny minority were committed to the type of thinking expressed by Jeremy's mother who sent her son to Nursery for these reasons: "To be away from me ..... to socialise, to make friends outside home and family". It was important for him to know "how to interact with other children." Most significantly, she commented: "There is always education within play ... they don't just play outside, there is something behind it all the time".

The balance of objectives, demonstrated by the principles underlying the Foundation Stage, was not generally reflected in the parental beliefs of the parents in this sample.

Unquestionably, the overriding priority for parents was their children's early acquisition of literacy skills. Irrespective of the early years educational provision on offer to their child, all parents shared this concern.

What did become apparent was that the more formal routines of the Reception class and its greater demands in terms of time did not necessarily lead to a greater satisfaction among parents. More parents of children in the Reception class felt that their children needed help. This was probably not because their standards were any lower (see Chapter 7) than that of their Nursery counterpart but that Reception class expectations were higher and perhaps that this induced more anxiety among the parent body. Kevin in Nursery had not started the reading process at all, yet his mother was able to say: "The reading at the moment just doesn't bother me." Reception class parents were more concerned to give their children the necessary support to keep up; "tuition" and "coaching" were already seen as possibilities.

As recognised earlier, a large number of parents in both groups favoured an early entry to school. At least some of the pressure to commence school prior to the statutory age of five must have derived from the concern about children achieving

these skills in good time. Nevertheless, the early start did not seem to alleviate the concern and, in some cases, seemed to make it more acute.

12.9. Parents as teachers?

While the early years educational setting did not appear directly to affect parental objectives, there was evidence to suggest it had an impact on the way these objectives were attained. Specifically the early years setting seemed to influence the way parents viewed their own role in their children's educational development. Evidence has been drawn from the 58 parental interviews conducted at the beginning of the study.

The notion that early entry to school through Reception class education provided a headstart for children dominated parental thinking. In terms of options, Nursery education at ages four to five was seen as a second best even when individual Nurseries were highly praised for the environment they offered. Concern centred predominantly on the fear that children would somehow fall behind their peer group in terms of their literacy skills development. Dan's mother summed up the concern of many, "He has completely missed out on what they would teach him in Reception class".

This concern seemed to call into question parents' own contribution to the process of children learning to read and write and prompted the investigation of parental beliefs surrounding these issues. These questions directed this analysis:

i. Did the immense importance attached to early entry to school by most parents reflect uncertainty about or lack of confidence in their own role?

ii. Did schools affect the nature of parental involvement, diminish or augment their active participation in children's literacy activities?

iii. Did school entry seem to shift the balance of power in the triadic relationship between school, home and child?

Irrespective of whether children were in Nursery or Reception classes the teacher-parent relationship was not on an equal footing. There was widespread reliance on the teacher to direct and initiate activities and a reluctance to take the initiative without the teachers' backing. Parents spoke of themselves as unqualified and untrained while schools were seen to have a monopoly on 'professionalism'. These phrases, each drawn from a separate interview, typified the feelings of many: "I guess she's got more experience than I've got," "You can't teach them as much as what the school can teach them," "I'd rather the school started them off," "I can't teach him anything new". Several parents also felt that teachers were in a stronger position to gain children's co-operation. "I think she has the upper-hand..she's clever". Children, they believed, would put up less resistance to teacher-directed instruction than to parent-directed tasks. Teachers were seen to command an authority which parents did not feel they possessed. Parents looked to teachers for expertise, authority and resources. In one case a parent looked to the teacher to inspire her child.

These expectations were accompanied by the belief that demands on teachers were generally too great and that, therefore, teachers needed the help of parents. "I realised that you can't leave it all to the school because they just won't get as far as they would without that little bit extra help at home" (Richard's mother). In the words of Harry's father: "It's up to us to make it happen for him".

This uneven partnership left the main initiative in teachers' hands with significant implications emerging with regard to home literacy routines. In over half the sample parents had instituted compulsory reading or writing routines as a direct result of school. These routines were initiated by both Reception and Nursery class teachers; however a closer analysis suggested that the implementation of these routines were driven by distinctive rationales reflecting the educational settings from which they originated. Reading routines instigated by the Reception class teachers were frequently referred to as homework: "It's only the last two terms, couple of months that he started bringing a chunk of homework home", "he's very keen to do the

homework", "when it comes to the weekend that's a different matter because for instance there is homework, reading". Viewed as homework they tended to be seen as compulsory. In the words of Benjamin's mother: "I think school work is very very important and I will always make sure that they do their homework and whatever they have to do". Henry's mother emphasised the priority attached to these routines "If there's a book in his bag then we do it every single day".

In the case of Reception class children these tasks had to be fitted in after a whole day at school, at a time when children were, as consistently reported by parents, very tired. Resistance to such tasks evoked a range of responses from avoidance tactics to some strong currents of antagonism; "You know you mention come on Matthew we've got to do your homework' and he's 'let me just finish this' or 'let me just do that'"; "Often with the set reading books from school it was a struggle" (William's mother); "we went through a phase you could just feel he felt it was just too stressful" (Frank's mother).

The interviews suggested that there was far less pressure associated with tasks sent home by Nursery class teachers. These were generally seen to be less demanding and indeed in a number of cases were seen as insufficiently so. Dan's mother complained, "Towards the end yes, they were given books to read and a few words to learn but I think a lot more at his age, a lot more should have been done". These tasks were also set in a less rigid time frame with children spending only a couple of hours per day away from home.

The Nursery class approach seemed to engender less anxiety among both parents and children "After dinner we try and do a little bit of homework: that's the thing he likes to do most, his reading folder. I don't force him. If he's not keen to do it I don't make him" (Jeffrey's mother). In more than one case parents of children in Nursery had been actively dissuaded from working with their child, "I was told to back off by the teachers at one point" (Bruno's mother) and Collin's mother was told "if he doesn't want to do it just leave it". Parents with less academically focussed expectations were generally more in harmony with the demands of Nursery class routines. Both these

Nursery parents were quite satisfied with the Nursery class environment: "He's five, you don't expect much really, do you?" and "You begin to realise you can't force anything, it's not worth the hassle, it's not worth the grief". Their counterparts in Reception classes confronted pressure, which often resulted in stressful situations.

In contrast, parental involvement in school-directed reading activities gave rise to quite a lot of tension among Reception class parents: "I have to get cross and then he'll do it" was the approach adopted by Harry's mother. Others acknowledged that they became "frustrated" and had to make a conscious effort to 'back off' or to be 'calmer'. The importance of success seemed to dominate the interaction: "I get too stressed if he gets it wrong" (Rajiv's Mother) and "It gets very frustrating when he doesn't want to learn" (Graham's mother). Yet, in spite of the stress so frequently referred to by these mothers, only two rejected the demands being made as inappropriate. In one case homework had been set involving numbers and some writing. "I wrote back saying they can't even hold a pencil, so how can they write!" (Kenny's mother). She retorted rather bitterly that she was 'not a teacher', asking why and how could she succeed where the school itself was failing.

Perhaps it was the concept of failure or potential failure at this very early stage that most strikingly characterised parental thoughts. About half of the sample of parents of Reception class children instigated literacy activities out of anxiety that their child was falling or might fall behind his peers or was struggling to keep up. These anxieties were partly the result of peer pressure. The centrality of the reading scheme in the teaching process promoted easy comparisons among both parents and children. In other cases schools themselves suggested extra parental input. Matthew's mother claimed that her son's teacher had made quite unreasonable time demands expecting up to an hour's reading practice: "If he's behind with his reading, they have done, yes. I just say I am not going to". While parents of children in the Nursery class expressed general anxieties about how the children would make up the 'lost' time of the Reception year, literacy activities in the home were not undertaken with the same intensity. This seemed to derive more from the influence of the external environment than directly from parental beliefs. There were parents in both groups who made reading and writing a compulsory activity, just as there were parents in both groups

who felt this was not appropriate. There were parents in both groups who promoted informal literacy activities and the element of fun just as there were those who felt duty bound to share the teacher's teaching role. The real differences emerged in the way such beliefs were implemented given the educational setting of the child. The content of the interviews suggested that 'reading' books were sent home on a more regular basis from Reception classes with quite rigorous expectations of both parent and child.

It would seem that this teaching role, adopted with little self-confidence by most parents, was then subjected to some enormous challenges. These challenges were mainly created by the uncomfortable process of reconciling the imposition of school demands on pre-school aged children. While the process ensured a high degree of parental involvement, it was an involvement that in many cases was characterised by an high degree of tension and frustration.

CHAPTER 13

TRANSITION TO COMPULSORY SCHOOLING: PARENTAL PERSPECTIVES

13.1. Introduction

Interview data collected prior to entry to Year One suggested that the majority of parents placed a keen emphasis on the early acquisition of literacy skills. Feelings were mixed as to whether or not children should be in school before the compulsory age of five.

Data collected a year later sought to establish how parents assessed the first year of compulsory schooling. The research questions paralleled those presented at Time One:

i How did parents assess the transition to and the experience of Year One, in terms of their own child?
ii How did parents view their child's literacy development during Year One?
iii How did parents assess their own involvement in their child's reading development?
iv Did the data suggest any differences in parental views according to whether their child had experienced Reception or Nursery class education prior to entering Year One?

13.2. The data

Practical considerations precluded a second interview. Instead, the parents of all boys in the sample received a questionnaire designed to elicit parental views on well-defined issues relating to the experience of Year One. The questionnaire (Appendix 9, section A) was divided into three sections dealing with:

i. the general experience of Year One
ii. issues relating to the process of learning to read

iii. school involvement in this process.

Questions were not open-ended but required either a yes/no answer or an answer selected from four options. However, parents were encouraged to add their own comments relating to particular questions and general comments at the end of the questionnaire. Many parents took full advantage of these more open-ended opportunities so some qualitative data was collected, although this was not as wide-ranging as that collected by interview the previous year. Fifty three questionnaires out of 60 were returned.

The non-respondents were a diverse group, including parents of boys in both groups and a range of backgrounds defined by mother's educational qualifications. One boy had moved home and his new address could not be traced by the school. Two boys had mothers who did not respond to any written communication; in both cases telephone numbers were not available. The missing data was omitted from the analysis but did not seem to present any particular bias.

13.3. Transition to Year One

A number of questions related to how well children settled into Year One, the degree to which they encountered significant problems and how difficult they found the work. For most the transition to Year One was not a major problem. The majority settled "very easily" or "quite well", within a few weeks of starting (figures 13.1 and 13.2).

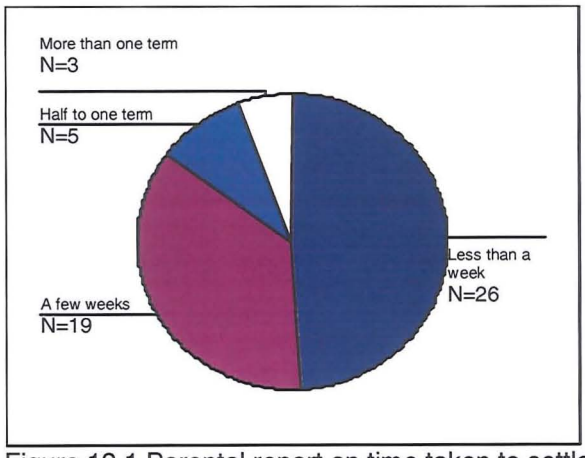

Figure 13.1 Parental report on time taken to settle into school

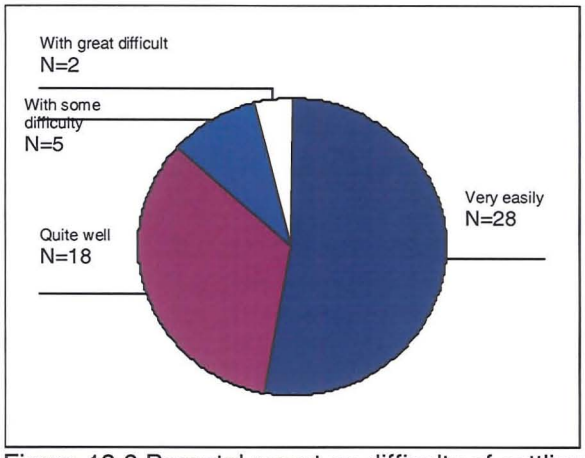

Figure 13.2 Parental report on difficulty of settling into school in Year One

There were no significant group differences among this majority (appendix 9, section B). Seven children settled in with "some" or "great" difficulty". Five of these had had two or three terms of Reception class experience and these boys had all been described as struggling in the previous year. The problems were not new but for some intensified as time went on. The Reception class boy who settled with "great difficulty", "found it lonely. He lost all his confidence and became convinced that he was stupid". His mother felt he was "under achieving" and this resulted in disruptive behaviour. Nevertheless, with much school support, she felt that he "was getting there". A mother of another boy in this same school felt that she had been given no direction from the school and commented, "I do not believe Zak has progressed as he should".

The two Nursery class children who took time to settle into Year One did so for very different reasons. These boys were not struggling at school in terms of their academic work. Both found learning to read quite an easy process and enjoyed it, although one mother felt "he is definitely not as ahead as the others and his confidence suffers as a result" . He found separating from his mother particularly difficult and was sometimes alone at playtime. He took longer than most in adapting to the school environment.

13.4. Summary

These figures suggest that Reception class experience did not help children make a smooth transition to Year One. For most children entry into the compulsory stage of schooling was prepared for equally well by part-time nursery education. When problems were encountered, they tended to be associated with academic difficulties, which had developed in the previous Reception class year.

13.5. The experience of Year One

The picture was quite different when parents came to assess the academic difficulties encountered by children in Year One (figures 13.3 to 13.5).

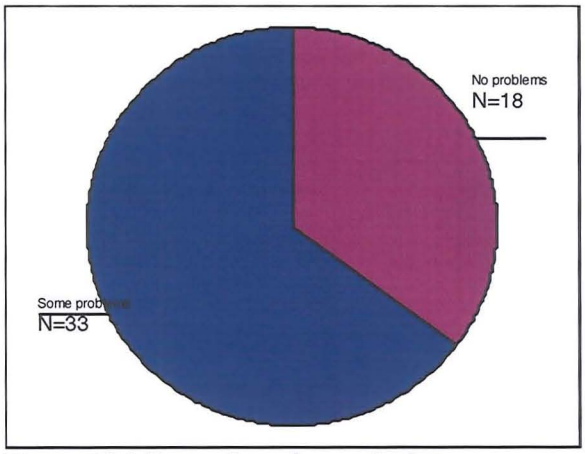

Figure 13.3 Proportion of parent who reported problems in Year One

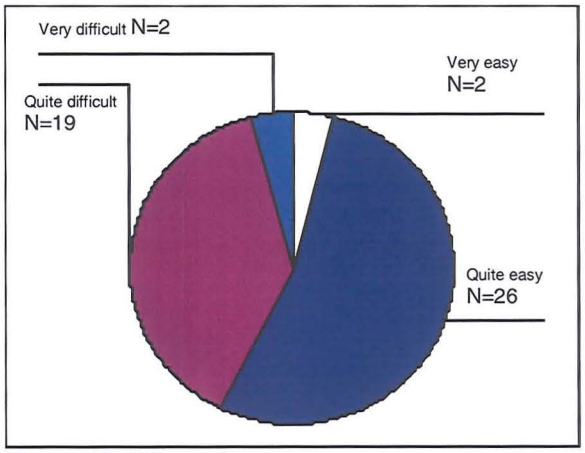

Figure 13.4 Parental reports of difficulty of school

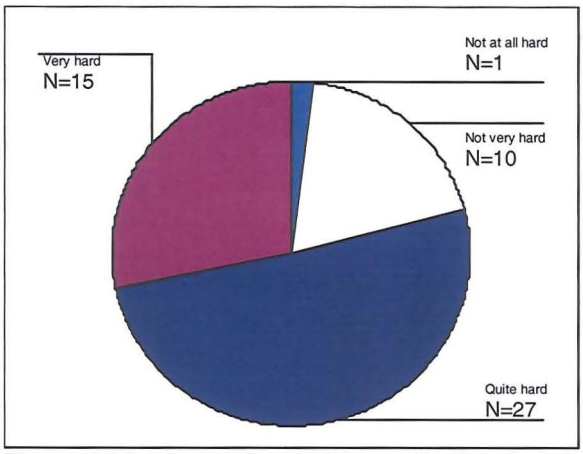

Figure 13.5 Parental reports on difficulty of work in Year One

Two thirds of the sample encountered some problems in Year One with four out of five of the sample finding the work "quite" or "very hard". General school problems were significantly associated with academic work, particularly reading. Difficulty of school was related to how well the child settled into school ($r= 0.43$ $p< 0.00$) and with difficulty in learning to read ($r=0.59$ $p< 0.00$). It also correlated with parental concerns about reading ($r= 0.45$ $p<0.00$). Parental concern about writing did not correlate significantly with general school difficulty or difficulty with reading although there was a correlation with how hard children found work in Year One ($r=0.28$ $p< 0.05$).

These results confirmed those of Millard (Millard, 1997 p.78) who asked her sample of 255 Year 8 children to recall the process of learning to read. Over a third of the boys remembered the process as a difficult one. The association between general school problems and difficulty with reading echoed Riley's findings that established a strong relationship between settling into school and success in learning to read (Riley, 1996).

No significant group differences were found in these measures (appendix 9, section B tables A.9.3 – A.9.5), so that boys from Reception and Nursery classes seemed to have a uniform experience of Year One.

A high degree of parental anxiety was noted among the sample as a whole but again no significant group differences were found (appendix 9, section B, table A.9.6. – A.9.8). A third of parents expressed concerns about their child's reading and writing

with one in five dissatisfied with their child's progress in reading. Most, however, felt that their children had enjoyed the experience of learning to read, "a lot" or "quite a lot". This assessment was similar to findings based on children's own reading self-concept judgements, (chapter 9), which found a discrepancy between how difficult they found reading and their attitude towards it. Attitudes, as expressed by children through scores on the PRAI scale and the RSCS sub scale, remained positive at this stage in spite of difficulties.

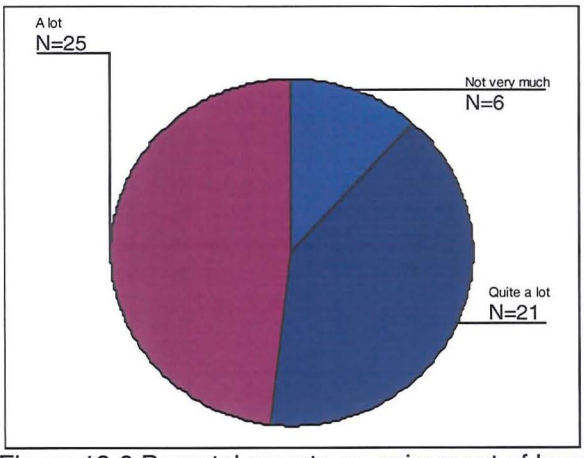

Figure 13.6 Parental reports on enjoyment of learning to read

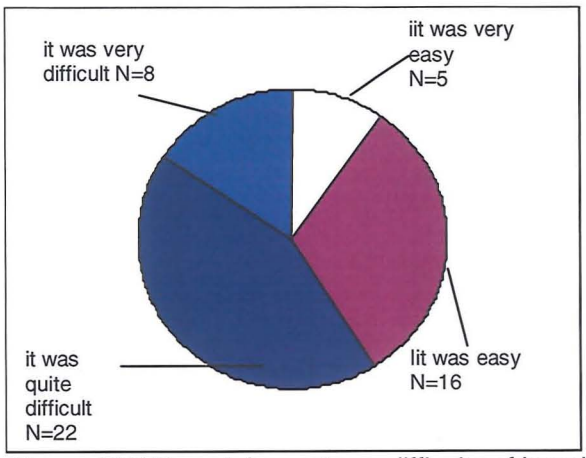

Figure 13.7 Parental reports on difficulty of learning to read

13.6. Boys' reading choice

Only about a quarter of the boys had defined reading interests and this was associated with poorer attitudes toward reading ($r= 0.35$ $p< 0.01$ on the PRAI scale). This mirrored Millard's study of reading choice among Year 8 boys which found that over

a third had "no named favourites" and saw all genres as equally unappealing" (Millard, 1997 p.53)

While a gender comparison was not available through this study, the data supported the findings of many other studies in showing a gender-related pattern to boys' reading choice. Sixteen boys were reported as having developed reading preferences by the end of Year One. Of these all except two preferred factual books to fiction, and humorous, adventure or 'spooky' stories. This choice was exactly the same as that identified by Bissex (Bissex, 1980), and quoted in Millard's much broader study (Millard, 1997) investigating gender differences in literacy. "Bissex (1980) who documented the reading and writing history of her son Paul from the age of 5 to 11, characterised his reading interests as a liking for: 'science fiction, adventure stories, humorous stories, and informational books with an emphasis on remarkable facts and scientific kinds of information'" (Millard, 1997 p.13).

13.7. Parents' role in their child's reading development

The continued committed involvement of parents in their children's reading activities was marked and this commitment was not distinguished by group (appendix figure A.9.9). The vast majority of the sample felt that they had helped their children "quite a lot" or "a lot". Well over half claimed to practise reading with their children between three and five times per week and one third suggested they practised every day. Over half the parents reported receiving some sort of guidance from the teacher but contact with teachers was not very frequent.

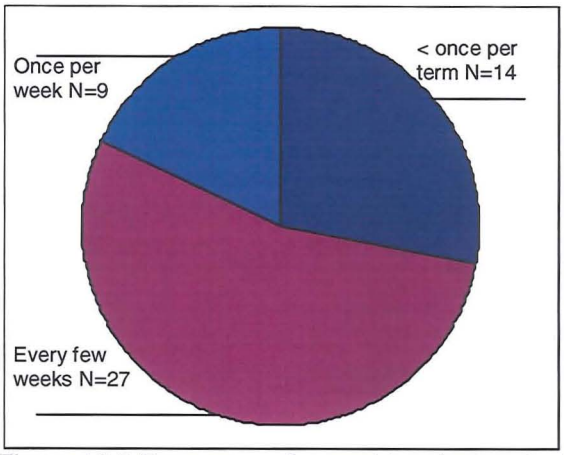

Figure 13.8 Frequency of parent-teacher contact

About six parents mentioned receiving booklets or letters giving general guidance about the reading programme. Comments added to the questionnaires referred most commonly to 'key words' or lists of words given by the teachers to practise at home and work with sounds. One mother wrote that the school advised her to give her child "encouragement", another not to "pressurise". In contrast, one mother had been told to "push harder" at home.

Whatever the nature of parental participation, it was clearly an important element of the schools' literacy programmes and one on which many schools relied quite heavily. One mother commented "The only reason we have no concern is because we push his reading at home. It doesn't come from school". This was not a typical response but certainly the teaching role identified the previous year, had, by the end of Year One, become firmly entrenched for most parents.

13.8. Conclusions

Parental opinion, as expressed through the Year One questionnaire, confirmed much of what had emerged from the children themselves. This first year of formal school was a difficult experience for most children in the sample, a difficulty mainly associated with academic work and predominantly with learning to read. Coping with the demands of Year One was a widespread problem, forcefully illustrated by the questionnaire data.

Given that this problem affected children of all abilities, the data would seem to provide good evidence that school expectations during this year were inappropriate for these children. The sample consisted of the most vulnerable group, summer-born boys and hence the youngest in the year-group. The dilemma facing parents and teachers was how to reconcile the formal curriculum set by the National Curriculum to be tested in just one more year, with the developmental demands of these children. This dilemma was eloquently expressed by one mother in her personal comments added at the end of the questionnaire:

"Initially I was very worried that he would be behind his peers. I still am to a certain extent. On the other hand I feel he was being pushed too much too soon. Only approaching Year Two is he showing some willingness to adopt a formal approach to education. Although his thirst for knowledge (is) acute, his retention good and his language and vocabulary good, he certainly was not ready for the practical 'putting pen to paper'. This has been a real battle over the past academic year and with hindsight I feel an unnecessary one".

This case typified the problems engendered by the incompatibility of school demands with the child's "readiness". This pattern was evident in a number of cases. One mother explained part of the Year One struggle as "The difficulty of coping with the need to work alone". The impact varied from child to child. One mother was not concerned: "I am not worried. I know he can do more, he just daydreams a bit as his teacher told me in his school report". But, in other cases this led to loss of confidence and poor self-concept. The mother of twins in this study felt both were at a disadvantage because of their age, emphasising the vulnerability of this summer-born sample. "They are both constantly struggling to catch up with the older children in the class. They are both very keen to read as they both love to learn and love books. However, because they are finding it difficult in class they are losing heart". Against the quantitative findings of a sample where four fifths of the sample found the work "quite" or "very hard", this comment is cause for concern. One can safely assume it represents a broader response where, for many, the difficulty of the tasks demanded by school is the trigger for children's despondency in relation to school work.

The results also indicated that the additional terms of Reception did not alleviate children's problems in the subsequent year. Children from Reception classes did not find Year One easier and problems were just prolonged. The reading practice which had commenced two to three terms earlier continued in much the same way, with the major focus on regular reading practice with high parental involvement. These findings support the conclusions of the IEA study (Elley, 1994) cited in the literature review that problems in literacy encountered by boys are associated with the early start of formal schooling.

Alongside the maturity-related difficulties encountered by this sample of boys lay the issue of gender. Evidence from this sample certainly seemed to be in line with the findings from other studies, that boys' literacy emerged differently to girls even in the earliest years. While the majority had not yet developed reading preferences of any kind, the quarter of the sample who had defined their interests by the end of Year One, formed a gender-typical group: choice of fact rather than fiction, with humour and adventure in stories.

Examination of children's data alongside these findings found little evidence of systematic provision for children's varied interests in reading. For most children, the process of learning to read dominated their encounter with literacy during Year One so that choice was determined by reading level, not interests. Reading material consisted mainly of reading scheme books with little variation to reflect individual interest. The task of selecting books that might interest the children emerged as a parental and often secondary role. When asked about how they helped their children in reading, only two mothers made explicit reference to this task. Both had been encouraged by school; in one case the mother had been told to explore a range of books with her son, in the other to take him to the library and to buy books for him.

Given the association between reading attitude and defined interests in terms of reading choice, recognition of and provision for children's reading preferences should play a vital role from the very earliest stages of children's literacy encounters. More so in relation to boys, whose poorer response to the school-related literacy has been

well-documented elsewhere (Millard, 1997). Neither recognition nor provision were in evidence. By the end of Year One, parents and children documented an experience of literacy dominated by the difficulty of skills acquisition. The process submerged the individuality of the reading experience creating a uniform development, during which the majority failed to find a reflection of their own interests, laying the seeds for boys' later, widespread "disengagement with reading as a leisure pursuit" (Millard, 1997 p.53).

CHAPTER 14

PARENTAL PERSPECTIVES ON KEY STAGE ONE

14.1 The data

Questionnaires were sent out to 57 out of 59 families participating in the study. Two families had moved and forwarding addresses were not found. Fifty-one questionnaires were returned.

The questionnaire consisted of 20 questions exploring parental views about their sons' experience of Key Stage One, in particular the boys' reading development in the context of this experience. The questions looked at the nature of boys' reading habits as perceived by their parents and how parents saw their own involvement in their sons' reading routines. Parental views about the age of entry to school were also included.

Although questions were generally framed in a multiple choice response format, several questions allowed for parental comment. In these instances many parents responded very fully and helpfully, reflecting a deep interest in the issues raised.

14.2. The experience of Year Two

Almost all parents considered that Year Two carried a significant work load believing their children had had to work "quite" or "very" hard. This burden was widely felt by the boys with more than half continuing to find school 'very' or 'quite' difficult (see fig.14.1). Just over half the sample struggled with some aspect of school during the course of the year. Of these problems, the majority were literacy-related Fifteen parents mentioned writing as a problem and nine mentioned reading. Almost half of the boys who were seen to have no problems at school, had not encountered problems the previous year. The other half had surmounted these problems.

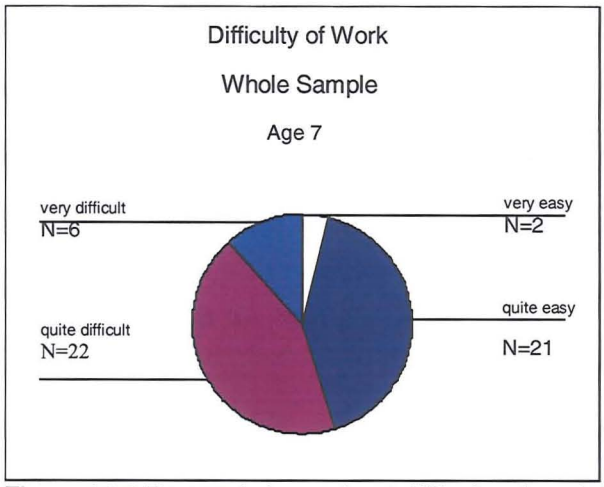

Figure 14.1 Parental views about difficulty of work in Year Two

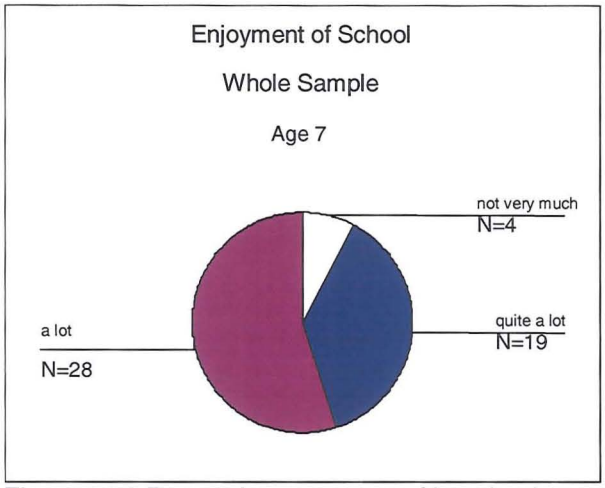

Figure 14.2 Parental assessment of boys' enjoyment of school

In spite of the widespread struggle with school work, parents generally believed that their children were enjoying school (fig. 14.2). This paralleled the boys' reading attitudinal scores where enjoyment remained positive in spite of reading difficulty.

Nevertheless significant relationships were found between enjoyment of school and the difficulty of the work. (rho = -0.42 $p < 0.01$) with enjoyment decreasing as difficulty increased. Smaller but significant relationships were also found between work load and school enjoyment (rho= -0.33 $p<0.05$) and specific problems and school enjoyment (rho= -0.33 $p<0.05$) (appendix 10, section A).

There were no major group differences except in parental view of workload (appendix 10, figure A.10.1 – A.10.3). This question was formulated as a four-item response and it was interesting to note that no parent felt their sons' work load was "not at all hard". There were more parents of the Nursery Class group in the "very hard" group and

only Reception class boys in the "not very hard" category. In terms of enjoyment, slightly more children enjoyed school "a lot" rather than "quite a lot" and a small number in each school did not enjoy school "very much".

14.3. Summary

Although most of the boys in the sample had by now settled into the routine of school and were dealing with its social demands, it was surprising to find that more than half of the parents felt their son was struggling with some aspect of the school curriculum. Problems with reading and writing were re-iterated over and over again. The data reflected a discordance between school expectation and boys' performance so that, according to parents, boys were often struggling to achieve what was being demanded of them. Parents generally felt that their children were asked to work hard. This feeling, which was marginally stronger among parents of the Nursery class group, may have been augmented by the feeling that there was some catching up to do. But this was attributed to the age factor (all boys were the youngest group within the year) as well as to the difference in early years experience. The confusion of ideas among parents about age of entry to school is discussed below. What emerged clearly in data from the parental questionnaire was that the level of demands on these boys continued to remain high, leaving more than half of the sample still contending with school requirements of literacy.

14.4. Reading routines and reading progress

Data from interviews with the boys had identified three types of reading routines occurring with different regularity in their homes. Parents were questioned on the frequency of these: children reading to an adult (normally in response to adult demand), children's reading out of choice (for pleasure) and parents reading to children. No group differences were noted (see appendix 10, Figure A.10.4 –A.10.9) so that data reported in this chapter focus on the sample as a whole. Data in figures 14.3 to 14.5 illustrate the frequency of each respectively.

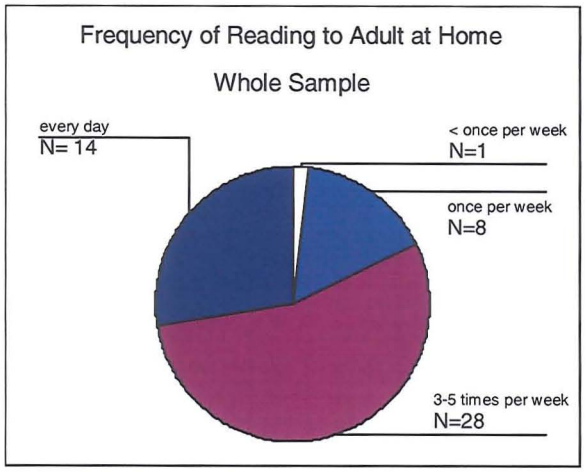

Figure 14.3 Frequency of reading to adult at home in Year Two

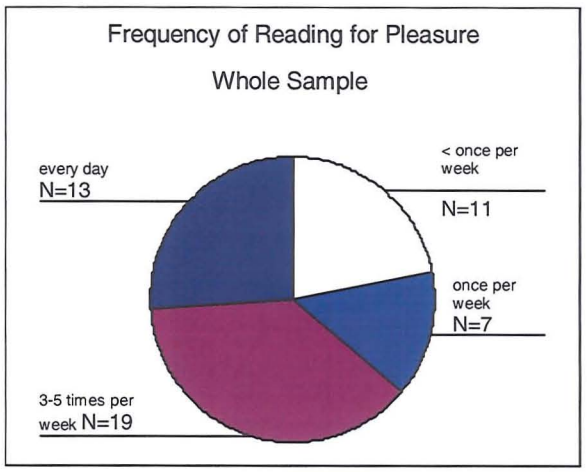

Figure 14.4 Frequency of reading for pleasure in Year Two

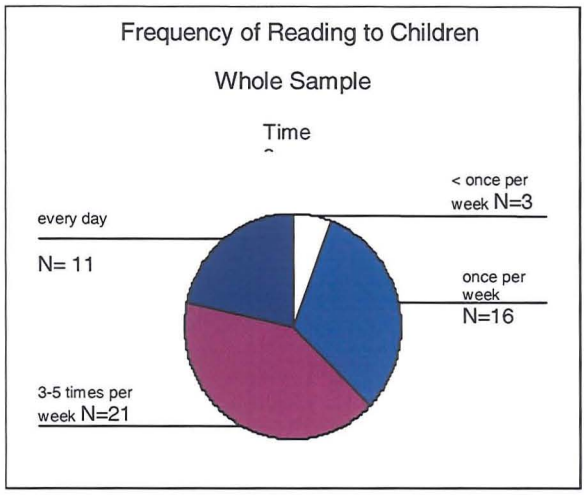

Figure 14.5 Frequency of reading to children in Year Two

The majority of boys in this sample did some sort of regular reading activity with their parents in response to parental demand. Most parents felt it was still necessary to listen to their children reading and, as illustrated in figure 14.3, over half did this between three and five times per week. Surprisingly no relationship was found between these levels of frequency and the standard of reading as assessed by parents. No variable could be identified which might explain the infrequency of reading at home by just under a fifth of the boys. They included fluent as well as poorer readers, boys from a wide variety of schools and both groups. Reading as an activity chosen by the boys themselves was even less frequent, with about a third of the sample hardly ever choosing to read. No relationship was found between the frequency of reading by

choice and reading on request. There was a correlation between frequency of choosing to read and reading ability as measured on the Neale Analysis of Reading Ability, (comprehension $r=0.33$ $p<0.05$; accuracy $r=0.34$ $p<0.05$). Parents reading to their children was also not a widely practised routine, a finding that had emerged from the boys themselves (chapter 11). Just over a third of the sample hardly ever read to their children, and a similar number did so only three to five times per week. Richard's mother described what was happening as follows: " Filling this in has made me realise how little time I spend reading to them (my children) and them to me (except school books). In earlier years I read them stories (Reception and below) and now they can read I tend not to". These findings contrasted with those of Weinberger who found that at exactly the same stage (age 7) "the practice of parents reading to their children still continued to be widespread in the families in the study" (Weinberger, 1996 p.94). This may suggest a change has occurred in the literacy-related priorities of parents during the years since her study. The parents' data echoed the boys' voices, suggesting that while 'reading practice' had become universal, this may have happened at the expense of reading for pleasure. Given the scale of the changes of literacy teaching in schools, repercussions at home would be expected.

In spite of these figures, most parents continued to feel they were helping their children in significant ways and that their role was no less important than in previous years (figure 14.6). But, as borne out by the children's own information, the parents' role remained quite narrow, supporting a skills-based approach to literacy. The comment of one mother reflected the intrusive nature of school-led concerns: " I read a bed-time story every night and test him on words every so often". This same parent felt her role ran parallel to the teaching staff. "I feel it's important to support my child as much as possible and help him understand his work, because maybe I explain things differently to the teachers". Parents' views of their role in helping with their boys' reading echoed the perception of the boys themselves. There was no clear distinction between parents and teachers. Several mentioned how they helped by "sounding out words" and "breaking them down". Many tried to encourage reading by making use of print in the environment: notices, signs or leaflets. School objectives dominated even bedtime stories: "I read him a bed-time story to help expression". These objectives were not of course universal. Although most of the books read by

the boys came from school (appendix 10, section C) a few parents felt they had an important role in providing reading material. In the words of one parent: "we supply an endless flow of various books for him to choose from..."

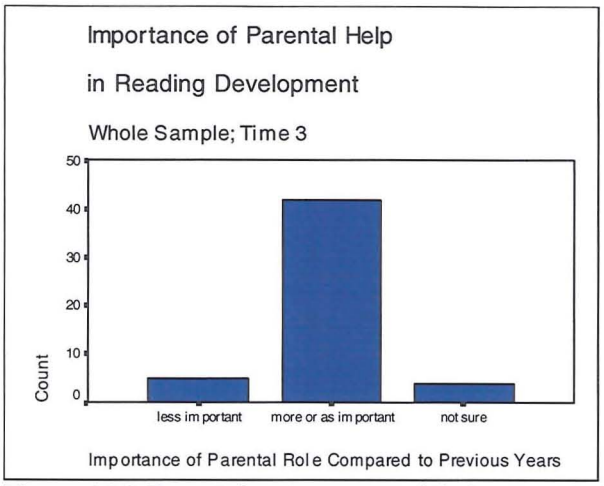

Figure 14.6 Parental assessment of their own role in helping their boys' reading development

Parents' assessment of their sons' reading was generally positive (figure 14.7) although their assessments were not entirely accurate. Correlations between parental assessment of their sons reading ability and boys' scores on the Neale Analysis of Reading Ability are reported in Appendix 10, section D. All except one of the parents who were dissatisfied with their boys' progress had sons who were reading below their chronological age, but many parents who were satisfied also had children scoring below their chronological age. Parents also felt that their sons found reading easier than they had done a year earlier. Whereas over half the sample had found reading "very" or "quite difficult" at the end of Year One, less than half felt this way at the end of Year Two. The group of boys (31%) who had, according to their parents, found reading "easy" at the end of Year One, had now grown to over half (54%). However, just two boys now found reading "very easy" compared to nine at the end of Year One. Taking the two categories together ("easy" and "very easy"), there was a growth from 41% to 58% in the number of boys falling within this range.

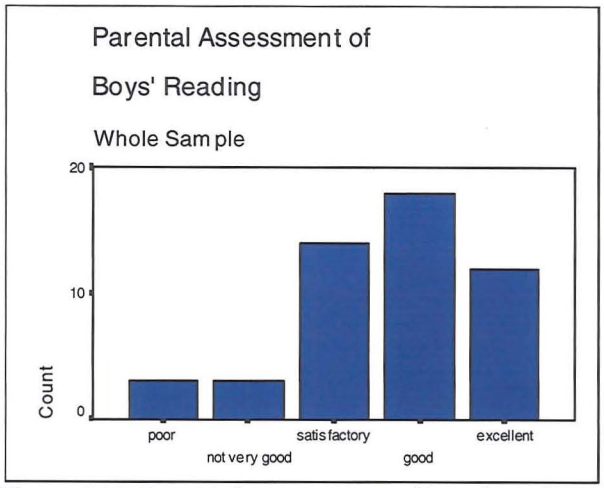

Figure 14.7 Parental assessment of boys' reading achievement

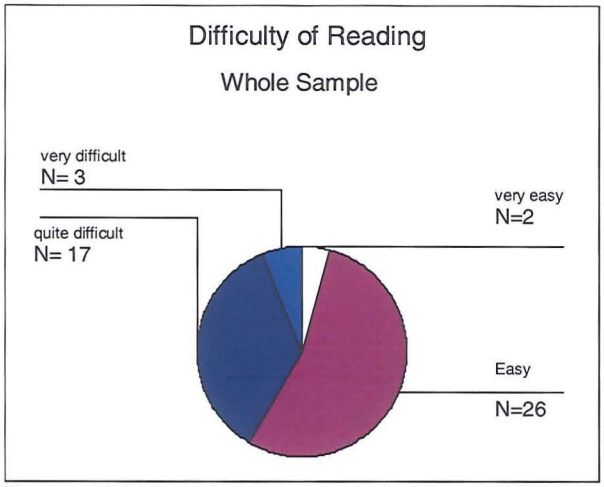

Figure 14.8 Parental assessment of boys' difficulty with reading

Parental assessment of how difficult their sons found reading correlated significantly with their reading achievement as measured on the Neale Reading Analysis (comprehension r= 0.53 p< 0.01; accuracy r=0.68 p< 0.01). As illustrated in figure 14.9, quite a number of parents felt their sons were finding reading easy although the boys were not achieving particularly well. The boys' ages ranged between 81 and 87 months, so that scores below 81 meant that boys' reading ages were below their chronological ages. The data seemed to suggest that in a number of cases boys' parents were either over-estimating their sons' achievement in reading or lacked awareness of the difficulties they encountered. Parents were less accurate in their assessment of the difficulties encountered by boys in comprehension. The fact that parents were less able to gauge their sons' comprehension skills than their accuracy skills in reading may have arisen from the emphasis on skill acquisition fostered by

school reading. These findings reinforce the concern with reading proficiency that has been noted and discussed in previous chapters. In assessing reading difficulty, parents were certainly more aware of their sons' technical reading skills than how well they understood the text.

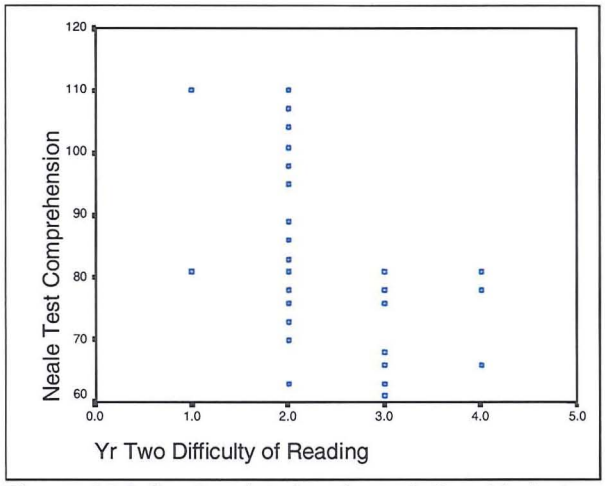

Figure 14.9 Scatterplot showing relationship between Neale Analysis of Reading Ability scores (comprehension) and difficulty with reading as assessed by parents

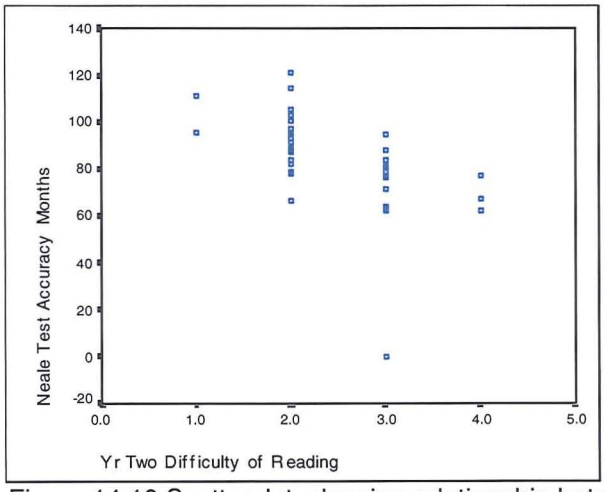

Figure 14.10 Scatterplot showing relationship between Neale Analysis of Reading Ability (accuracy) and difficulty with reading as assessed by parents

14.5. Summary

Reading routines at the end of Key Stage One continued to be heavily dominated by the demands of 'school' literacy with its focus on the acquisition of skills. Most reading remained limited to school contexts as reading practice times. A very small proportion of boys read beyond what was asked of them and similarly few parents became involved in reading routines, which were not linked with school tasks. Most parents were satisfied with the way reading skills had or were being acquired although this did not necessarily reflect the boys' actual reading achievement.

14.6. Parental assessment of reading development during Key Stage One

Parents' assessment of the way schools had taught their sons to read was generally positive and was correlated with parental satisfaction with their sons' progress in reading in terms of reading accuracy ($r=0.39$ $p<0.01$) but not with reading comprehension.

The majority of parents felt that learning to read before entry to Year One was "important" or "very important" (appendix 10, figure A.10.11). This opinion was found irrespective of the early years experience of their own boys. Over half the sample felt that there was not too much emphasis on literacy during Key Stage One. Out of 51 responses only four felt there was too much emphasis, with a further ten unsure (appendix 10, figure A.10.12). However, there was a difference in the way the two groups of parents viewed the relative contribution of school years in the process of learning to read. Two thirds of the Reception class group parents attached importance to the year leading up to Year One, as illustrated in appendix 10, section F and believed that this had been beneficial. By contrast, two thirds of the parents of Nursery children thought that Year One had been the most important for their children's reading development. This difference did not quite reach statistical significance ($p<0.09$).

Just as school experience seemed to have influenced parental perceptions about the course of literacy development, so too, there was a not unexpected connection between parental views about age of entry to school and their sons' actual experience. Of the 51 responses available at the end of the study (see figure 14.11), 28 felt their sons had commenced school at the correct time. Twelve parents felt that their sons had started too early. Of these, ten belonged to the Reception class group. Ten parents felt that their sons had commenced school too late. Of these, nine were Nursery class group children (figures 14.11 and 14.12).

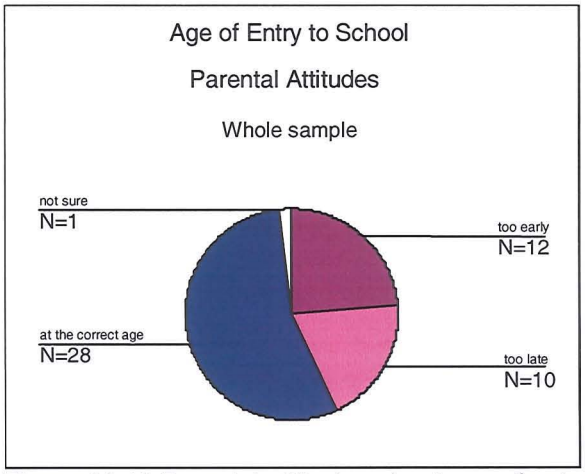

Figure 14.11 Parental attitudes about age of entry to school at the end of Key Stage One

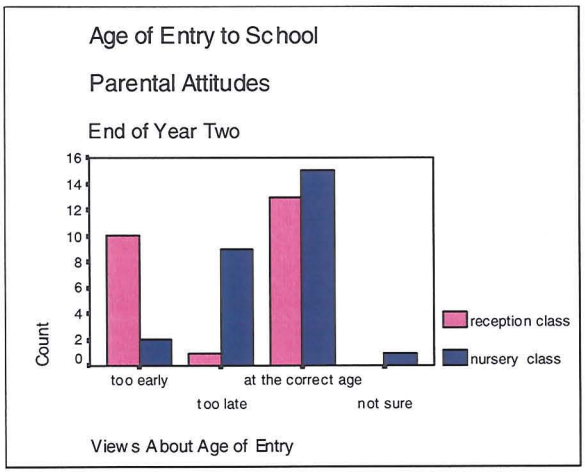

Figure 14.12 Group comparison of parental attitudes to age of entry to school at the end of Key Stage One

Focussing on the two categories of 'too early' or 'too late', a 2 x 2 chi square test yielded a significant group difference (Appendix 10, Section G). A few comments

made by parents on the questionnaire illustrate the types of concerns they were sharing. Those who felt their boys had started school too late were mainly worried by the competition they encountered with older children in the same year group. "He has been playing a game of "catch up" ever since he started school ...From an emotional/maturity point of view I feel Bruno started school at the right age". In this case judgements about school entry were being made for reasons that were not necessarily in the boy's own best interest but in the context of what was happening in school. These feelings were echoed by others: " In comparison to the older children in his class I know Jasper is behind in some areas and that he himself is aware of this". In fact Jasper was above his chronological reading age in comprehension and accuracy. His mother was "satisfied" but not pleased with his progress, concerned that her son still viewed reading as a chore. Only three parents suggested that pre-school education was educationally insufficient. "He was very bored and frustrated in his last term of Nursery so in his case an earlier start would have been ideal" (parent of Jeremy). Amit had been attending a playgroup rather than a Nursery: "Playgroup didn't seem to stretch him to his potential. He enjoyed the days he spent in school much more". Nevertheless, when Jasper was in Nursery he had a reading attitude score within the top 15% of the sample while Amit was in the 'typical' range.

Of the twelve parents who felt their sons had commenced school too early, ten explained this further on the questionnaire. Their comments expressed quite an intense anxiety among many: "Harry was 4 years 4 months when he started school. Although we felt he was ready, really looking back he was mentally and physically too young. I feel too much pressure is put on young children too early. They should be learning through play. Harry is a very serious and sensitive type and I feel that this has been made worse through starting school (formal education) too soon".

14.7. Summary

Parents placed a high priority on the acquisition of literacy skills from a very early age. A large majority felt the process should begin prior to the statutory age at which

children must commence school. However, by the time their sons had reached the end of Key Stage One, the year prior to Year One had relatively less importance when compared to years to Years One and Two.

The majority endorsed commencing school at the statutory age (in the term following children's fifth birthday). But this was not an option available to many families and has now diminished even further. LEAs are encouraging children to enter schools well before the legal requirement and alternatives are not readily available. As Frank's mother commented: "General view... we (in the UK) seem obsessed with starting school a.s.a.p. Others do things rather differently and have better results". Although comparing results internationally is a difficult task and well beyond the scope of this study, concerns about the status quo were quite evident in the responses drawn from this group of parents.

CHAPTER 15

CONCLUSIONS

15.1. Introduction

The path of a child's reading development has begun to unfold long before most children participate in a formal 'educational' setting outside the home, be it playgroup, Nursery or school. Myriads of factors have already begun to assert their own individual influences on how this development takes place. But the point at which this study begins, the transition to compulsory school, should not be an arbitrary one, for it marks one of the great watersheds in a child's life. From the age of five all children in England now bring the diversity of their experience with reading to a shared experience of schooling monopolised by the demands of the National Curriculum and the National Literacy Strategy. When this watershed should take place continues to be the subject of much discussion, a debate reported in earlier chapters. This study has sought to contribute new material to the debate by analysing the impact of the timing of this transition on one of the most important educational processes of these early years, the development of reading.

This longitudinal study has scrutinised reading development through Key Stage One, not just from the more usual standpoint of 'achievement', though this too played a part, but more reflectively as it appeared from the perspective of the boys and their parents. Reading development encompassed attitudes, incorporating its affective, cognitive and behavioural components, as well as skills. These constituents of reading development were analysed in the context of the timing of the transition to school, exploring whether, and if so, how, the early encounter with this watershed would impact upon them.

15.2. What types of attitudes toward reading do boys develop between the ages of five and seven? Does attitude toward reading at the age of five have any predictive value for attitude toward reading at the age of seven?

The combination of qualitative and quantitative methodologies yielded an unusually rich bank of material through which to view these often obscure dimensions of the reading process. The range of reading attitude and reading self-concept scales adopted complemented the more open-ended conversational interviews with the boys. Each threw light on the other although neither was without drawbacks. These drawbacks were most in evidence at the beginning of the study, when the subjects were just approaching or had just had their fifth birthday. External time constraints put a severe limitation on the output of the conversational interviews with the boys and some of the interaction had disappointing yields. This was to be expected among such young children and points to one of the barriers encountered by teachers setting out to explore their pupils' reading attitudes. In contrast to the relatively quick assessments of reading skills, with a plethora of tests at hand, assessing attitudes is time consuming and hindered by the paucity of instrumentation developed for use with British children.

The pitfalls of interviewing young children have been widely described and the implications were explored in the discussion of methodology for the pilot study (appendix 1). These pitfalls were not entirely avoided. In particular the introduction of direct questions sometimes led to dead ends reflected by the familiar 'I don't know' response of young children. This inappropriate line of questioning stemmed partly from lack of experience in this type of interview but partly from the pressure of time and the need to get to the heart of the matter within the allotted time slot. Both were detrimental to the quality of some responses but in spite of these methodological obstacles, the data succeeded in painting a vivid picture of the emergence and development of reading attitudes and the beliefs with which they were associated.

At age five, most children had a positive outlook towards reading and almost all saw the primary function of reading as 'enjoyment' but attitudes were found to be profoundly influenced by the transition to school. Boys who had had experience of

'proper school' prior to the compulsory age of five, in the form of Reception class education, had developed distinctly school-related concepts of reading. These boys were the first to express the notion of reading as a compulsory activity and to recognise the objective of reaching independence in reading. They were reading in order to learn how to read, to gain 'proficiency'. Reading was emerging as a school-like task in which performance was judged both in the home and the school setting, by the boys themselves and the adults around them. This was accompanied by an awakening awareness of adult expectations and the very first expressions of the boys' own perceptions of competence. Boys in Reception classes had a distinctive perception of their parents' and teachers' roles in which the reading interaction had become a didactic one. Even unlikely routines, such as teacher story time, manifested a 'learning' dimension in the reading concept of boys who had commenced school. No equivalent development of the reading concept had taken place among the Nursery class group.

A year later the notion of reading for proficiency had engulfed the concept of reading across the sample. The number of boys who made no mention of 'enjoyment' as a function of reading doubled from five to ten, eight of whom had come from Reception classes. By the end of Key Stage One this had dropped still further: less than a third of the sample referred to 'enjoyment' as a function of reading. The intensity of this focus was reflected in the range of reading activities which were subject to the same interpretation by the boys. Whether adult and child were seen to be sharing a book together, or two children were sitting side by side with a book between them, the situations almost invariably meant a reading practice time and the text 'a reading book'.

The idea of reading in order to learn how to read overshadowed the development of boys' awareness of reading as a source of pleasure or information. It has some disturbing echoes of the disembodied reading described by Wade over ten years ago: "completely absent from Peter's account is any notion of reading as meaningful, informative or pleasurable" (Wade, 1991 p.218). By the age of seven, the absence of a wider understanding of the functions of reading was particularly evident among boys with negative attitudes to reading. This was one of a range of repercussions of the all-

consuming concern with reading proficiency, eloquently described by the boys themselves. In effect, it served to narrow boys' encounters with literacy and so limit the development of their understanding of the broad range of functions readers can ascribe to reading.

In this constraint parents and teachers played a vital role. The vested interest of schools to achieve appropriate SATs results and the keen anxiety of parents generated by this framework, combined to support a misplaced focus on the acquisition of reading skills. "The current pressure on English schools to promote basic literacy through intensive daily one-hour lessons is leading to an unhelpful concentration on the surface features of punctuation, phonics, word lists and reading aloud in groups" (Whitehead, 2002 p.56). Ironically, access to texts was increasingly withdrawn with more time and effort being expended on listening to children read than on reading to them.

Across the whole sample the process of learning to read, as transmitted via school and home, was experienced as a difficult one. At the end of Year One about 50% of the sample perceived reading as a difficult task and had doubts about their own competence. Scores from RSCS (Chapman & Tunmer, 1997) showed that boys from the Reception classes perceived reading to be more difficult than those from the Nursery classes. The extent of the difficulty met by boys in learning to read was corroborated by parents, over 50% of whom reported that their son had found learning to read "very" or "quite" difficult. A year later there was no significant improvement in the reading self-concept sub-scale scores of difficulty or competence in spite of the actual improvements in reading. Parental assessment of the difficulty of reading had changed, with a drop in the number of parents who reported that their sons found reading "very" or "quite difficult". Nevertheless, at just under 50% of the sample, this was still a large proportion. Significant group differences were still in evidence with Reception boys' perception of their competence in reading poorer than that of their Nursery counterparts.

The extent of the difficulties encountered by boys in this area of the curriculum challenges the prominent status bestowed on the process of learning to read during

these early years and raises the question: "at what price?" Analysis of data during the course of this study pointed to some of the hidden costs and to the potential longer-term effects on reading attitudes, triggered by the process.

- Repercussions on parent-child interaction around reading

The potential contribution of parents to the development of literacy is limitless but as pointed out in Millard's study of boys' literacy: "An emphasis in school on basic skills, and reading schemes in particular, often ignores the powerful influence of the home and creates a version of literacy that bears little resemblance to what has been learned through prior experience" (Millard, 1997 p.37). Evidence from this study showed that the school emphasis on basic skills did not just ignore the home influence but acted detrimentally towards it. Compulsory reading, initiated by school, met with significant resistance associated with the difficulty and dislike of the task. In a few cases, the interaction around reading generated deep levels of anxiety and anger for the boys even prior to the compulsory age of schooling. Over time this exacerbated hostility to reading and caused high levels of stress to parents and pupils.

- Emotional demands of learning to read

The difficulties associated with learning to read, did not necessarily damage enjoyment of the process. Almost all parents believed that their sons had enjoyed learning to read 'quite a lot' or 'a lot'. The boys' own attitudinal scores gave more reserved backing to this assessment. Their distribution of scores on a number of attitudinal measures did not reflect quite the same positive certainty as their parents'.

Attitude toward reading showed more stability as the boys grew older. A composite attitude score at Times One and Two showed a correlation of 0.28 ($p<0.04$) compared to a correlation of 0.58 ($p<0.01$) between Times Two and Three. The mounting experience of the boys' encounters with reading was beginning to make itself felt; the widespread encounter with the difficulties of learning to read was an important dimension of this experience. Inevitably these difficulties put enjoyment at risk and

offered the potential of long-term damage. Other research has pointed to the negative cycle, which is often triggered by the early encounter of problems. Stanovich referred to this as Matthew effects (Stanovich, 1986). Individual cases in this study illustrated the type of damage inflicted by the struggle with which some of these boys were prematurely confronted. More often than not, the effects appeared to be transient: occasionally they became entrenched. In either case the reading challenge set to these boys harboured enormous expectations among pupils, their parents and their teachers driven at every level by peer group comparison. These in turn set up the possibility, and in some cases the inevitability, of failure. The study offered vivid evidence of the pressure brought to bear on both parents and boys, illustrating the emotional dimension of the process whereby boys learn to read and the very early impact on boys' feelings of competence and ultimately on their self-esteem.

- Understanding the purpose reading: growth and curtailment

The examination of boys' attitudes towards and beliefs about reading portrayed a perception of reading dominated by the task of learning to read and its tools, in the form of reading schemes. By the age of seven, boys were still more concerned with the colour coding of books and their print size than the content. In spite of the immense growth in the market of children's books, boys seemed to be hugely influenced by reading scheme books. Biff and Chip were strong rivals of Harry Potter in the frequency with which they were mentioned. Reading was viewed as a long ladder of progression in which the progression itself assumed the function of reading. Books were read so that one might progress to the next. Given the emphasis of the National Literacy Strategy on exploring authors and genres, these findings were disappointing. They indicated once again the primary importance attached to print-related decoding skills, at the expense it would seem of developing an intimate and emotive rapport with books. Boys' characteristic reading preferences, observed in this study, have been comprehensively reported elsewhere (Millard, 1997 p.11-12). But evidence from the boys in this study suggested that the structured progression of school reading failed to acknowledge the emergence of these preferences. Boys showed a strong tendency to describe their reading by 'level' rather than by interest

and shared with their parents an intense concern with the rungs of progress on the reading ladder.

- The emergence of poor readers: the cycle of failure

Inevitably, the concept of reading as a ladder of progression creates its own casualties. After just one year of school some children will have climbed high while others are stuck on a low rung and held back by "a cycle of interacting skill deficits"(Clay, 2001 p.222). In the case of Reception class pupils this may have occurred before the children have reached the statutory age of schooling and certainly by the end of Year One. This perceived failure is the direct result of the commencement of formal teaching. As Clay pointed out: "Before instruction began these children were not easily distinguished from their peers" (Clay, 2001 p.223). Unfortunately, the identification of these children has not meant that their needs are well met. Clay's theoretical model, the basis of the Reading Recovery programme aimed at such children, was not reflected in the type of help offered by parents under the influence of school demands. Data from this study suggested that compensation by parents tended to focus on improving a narrow set of phonological skills so that unwittingly the deficit cycle was intensified rather than broken. This single focus ignored the range of needs of the low achiever. The eagerness to progress discouraged parents from re-reading familiar material. Children were widely judged by others and themselves as good or poor readers by the yardstick of the difficulty of the text they were reading. As illustrated in this study and in Moss' work (1999a) boys in particular take great precautions not to be seen to be reading easy material. This encouraged them and their parents to select inappropriate reading material and so compounded their problems. The boys quickly became reluctant readers, tended to avoid reading and so became part of the negative cycle (Stanovich, 1986). By the end of Key Stage One, the majority of boys with the most negative attitudes were also poor readers.

15.3. Is there a systematic difference in reading attitudes between boys who begin school at different ages?

This study examined a sample of boys who had begun school up to one year apart. The analysis demonstrated that the demands of the literacy curriculum in Years One and Two exerted a strong influence on the attitudes of the boys across the sample. The influences have already been described and their implications analysed in the previous section. These influences were found irrespective of the length of time boys had already been at school. However, analysis of attitudes prior to entry to Year One did yield some noticeable differences between boys in the Nursery and Reception class groups. Several boys in Reception classes had begun to develop a didactic perception of the purpose of a range of reading routines. Only boys in Reception classes talked about the need to learn to read and the introduction of reading as a compulsory routine. Boys in Reception classes had also begun to realise that reading could be correct or incorrect and that this entailed adults' judgements on their performance. These reading-related expectations engendered some negative feelings among the boys and widespread anxiety among the parents. In a minority of cases the influence was transparently long-term. Alex was a case in point where high parental anxiety was noted in the Reception class year and the interactions around reading became increasingly antagonistic over the years. In others, the problems resolved themselves over time.

Concerns about the types of attitudes which typically emerged among the sample of Key Stage One boys have already been documented. Their emergence during the Foundation Stage intensifies these concerns and challenges the appropriateness of the reading-related routines and expectations, which have become an intrinsic part of the Reception class curriculum.

Evidence from this study, drawn mainly from qualitative data, suggests that the attitudes of boys in Nursery were less affected by the literacy demands of Key Stage One. These boys were better shielded from the premature introduction of a formal reading curriculum, whose impact was highly visible among the sample of boys in Reception classes. Group differences persisted in subsequent years, reflected in the

development of poorer reading self-concept among the Reception class boys. These differences lasted to the end of Key Stage, at which time boys in the Reception class group still felt themselves to be less competent than did their Nursery counterparts.

These effects have not been widely recognised, partly because of the methodological problems associated with gathering evidence of this nature from such young children. This study has made an original contribution in this area and the implications of this evidence should be carefully considered in the light of current trends in school admission policies.

15.4. Do boys who begin school prior to the compulsory age achieve a higher standard of reading than those who commence school according to statutory requirement?

Over the last few years most LEAs have adopted the policy of inviting children to enter school well before the date of statutory requirement. The critique of this policy by eminent educationalists has pointed the finger firmly towards expediency rather than pedagogy as the driving force of this movement. As reported earlier, Anning (Anning, 1998) has accused the government of collusion in the de facto lowering of school entry age. Meanwhile, parents remain bewildered and torn by what seems best for their children, but in most cases are given no choice in the matter.

A number of studies have questioned the quality and appropriateness of education offered by Reception classes (Sestini, 1987; Bennett & Kell, 1989; West & Varlaam, 1990). Many compared these unfavourably to the facilities of purpose-built Nursery classes. The introduction of the NLS and the literacy hour into Reception classes has further widened the debate. Fisher has questioned whether the NLS provides a model which is flexible enough to be developmentally appropriate for all children (Fisher, 2000). This argument has been endorsed by Riley who views the Reception class year as a critical one for literacy progress but recognised that the most effective teaching was "skilled and individually appropriate" (Riley, 2001). Recently, evidence submitted to the House of Commons reflected a real concern for the potential damage

which the formality of Reception class education could inflict on young children, particularly boys (Education and Employment Committee, 2000).

In spite of these misgivings, the strongest current in the educational tide of these last few years has continued to be driven by a passionate concern with standards. The National Curriculum and, subsequently, the NLS, have imposed uniform directives committed to raising these standards. "Current government policies on early childhood education prioritise children's academic achievements, not their emotional and social development, nor their physical well-being" (Anning & Edwards, 1999 p.81). Such is the anxiety generated by the possible failure of these initiatives in achieving their targets that steps have been taken across the country for their earliest possible introduction. The literacy hour, albeit in different guises, has established itself in classrooms for four-year-olds.

The emotional repercussions have been discussed in the framework of this study and beyond. Furthermore, evidence from this study suggests that early entry into Reception class did not result in better standards of reading at the end of Key Stage One. Prior to entry into Year One all boys in the sample were tested on a range of phonological skills associated with later reading success. Half the sample had been in full time school for up to three terms compared to a morning or afternoon session of Nursery in the comparison group. At this point Reception class boys scored more highly on the letter recognition test but were comparable to Nursery class boys on other phonological awareness tests. Two years later the same boys were tested on the Neale Analysis of Reading for both comprehension and accuracy scores. The slight advantage in accuracy scores among the Reception class group did not reach a significant level. Scores in comprehension were almost identical.

These findings were based on a small but homogeneous sample of boys. All were summer-born and so constituted the youngest cohort within the year group. The evidence should provide re-assurance to many parents in this study, and perhaps many more outside, that the lack of those extra school terms did not disadvantage the boys in terms of reading achievement as measured at the end of Key Stage One. The slight advantage in decoding skills among the Reception class group was perhaps a

reflection of the immense drive to foster this dimension of reading acquisition, promoted by the NLS (Department of Education and Skills, 2001 p.4). This narrow focus seemed to accentuate an unhelpful discrepancy between comprehension and accuracy and raises doubts about the value of the premature intrusion of Key Stage One objectives into the lives of these very young boys.

15.5. How are the demands of compulsory schooling reflected in parental attitudes toward and expectations of their boys' reading development?

Expediency and educational theory have vied for prominence in the long-running debate about school admission policies. In this tug-of-war parents have lent support to both sides, their voices contributing alongside those of teachers and politicians to the many arguments being heard. More than politicians or teachers, parents would seem to be caught in this dilemma, unsure about the pedagogical pros and cons, influenced by practical considerations and most important of all by the unique experience of observing their own children. The data collected from parents across the two years of this study offered an unusual insight into parental perspectives, showing the impact of policy as it rebounded from parent to child.

The critical role of parents in these early years is undisputed and their contribution to reading development has been widely described. Since the 1990s acknowledgement of this contribution is made in the significance attached by schools to parent-teacher partnership and in the range of research investigating the best model for such partnerships (Hannon, 1995; Wolfendale & Topping, 1996). This practical involvement of parents has not necessarily led to a rapprochement at a more conceptual level and recent research has highlighted the need: "to know more about the range of relationships between parents and professionals in the types of experiences, influences and explicit assumptions that shape these relationships" (Riddick & Hall, 2000 p.114).

This study has compared the views of parents with boys in contrasting educational settings, investigating how these experiences might influence parental perspectives on the early years and relationships in the parent teacher and parent-child dyads.

Evidence suggested that, irrespective of the setting, all parents shared the concern identified by Anning more than a decade ago: "in one sense, infant teachers are simply responding to the demands of society, or more specifically of parents, to get on with 'proper schooling'. On the whole parents favour the old elementary school tradition of instruction in the 3 Rs" (Anning, 1991 p.17). This was in line with the findings of a recent Scottish study into parents' priorities in selecting nursery provision (Foot et al., 2000). Among 911 parents, the single most important aim of pre-school was preparation for school. But irrespective of the way this objective prevails among the parent body, data from parents in this study pointed to a strong directional influence from external educational setting to parent. Authors of the Scottish study claimed that this conceptual dichotomy between education and play was "distinctly at variance with current policy". (Foot et al., 2000 p.198). This would not seem to be the case in the English context where the more formal Reception class setting has fostered rather than counteracted the parental drive for 'proper school' which has tended to disengage learning from play. As Wood pointed out in her study on play in Reception classes: "the teachers felt that it was difficult justifying the importance of play to parents who think that, if children are playing they cannot be working, and therefore are not learning" (Wood, 1999).

Attitudes among parents of the Nursery class group differed from those of parents with children in Reception classes. The latter expressed feelings of being pressurised into establishing fixed reading routines which came to be viewed as homework and so became compulsory 'tasks'. These routines intensified parental anxiety and in a number of cases generated parent-child conflict. In contrast there was little pressure on the boys in Nursery classes to follow set reading routines. In a number of cases, parents were actively dissuaded from reading with their boys if conflict arose. The small number of parental complaints about Nursery tended to concern the lack of preparation in this area.

These differences have important implications for the debate about age of entry to school. This debate has mainly focussed on the direct impact of school entry on children. Data from parents in this study enhances our understanding of how school

entry can also affect children indirectly, and therefore in less obvious ways, through the changes brought about in parental perspectives. Across the sample, parents shared an over riding concern for 'standards' and a high degree of anxiety that these standards might not be met. A comparison of parental attitudes in Belgium and Britain, cited in chapter 2, had found British parents to be far more concerned with school-type activities. They wanted more time spent on: "organised work such as reading and writing preparing them for primary school" (David, 1992 p.6).

These anxieties are intrinsically bound up with the early age of admission and the testing which now occurs at both ends of Key Stage One through baseline assessment at entry and SATs at the end of Year Two. Irrespective of pedagogical arguments and issues of individual maturity parents feel obliged to set their children on the formal educational path as soon as possible: "the sign systems of school literacy... are infiltrating the informal settings of day care centres, childminders and even some young children's bedrooms or playrooms at home. Parents are pressurised into joining this version of the 'literacy club' " (Anning & Edwards, 1999 p.83).

Previous research has pointed to the imbalance in the teacher-parent relationship (Hannon, 1995). Certainly parents in this study were subject to considerable influence by teachers. As expected, the Reception class setting made more formal demands on boys compared to their counterparts in Nursery. These demands engendered anxiety and stress among parents yet few were prepared to object or challenge the assumption that underlay the demands. Policy on school admission, which governed teacher behaviour, acted uni-directionally in the teacher-parent dyad so that in effect parents were often disempowered. Parents felt teachers knew best and were happy to accept their guidance even in the face of associated problems. Prior to entry to Year One, interviews with parents afforded ample evidence of this humility. Parents were reluctant to initiate activities, which they viewed as the teachers' monopoly.

The disempowerment of parents, signalled by the commencement of formal school, was perpetuated throughout Key Stage One. The role that parents felt able to play shadowed that of teachers and seemed to be constrained by their demands. Parents worked primarily on helping their sons acquire decoding skills, which were widely

perceived as the best route to successful reading. Reading at home became reading practice times in support of school reading. To what extent this reflected the real intention of teachers was not explored in this study and perhaps forms part of the body of research into teacher and parent perspectives waiting to be done. It was apparent that parents believed they were responding to school demands and that the vast majority of parents felt they were still playing an important role in their son's reading development.

According to questionnaire data collected from parents at the end of Key Stage One, the nature of this role was highly restricted and seemed to ignore the large body of evidence pointing to the contribution of other types of parental involvement. Most prominent was the diminished role of parents in reading to their children. The motivational benefits of this activity and the potential for children's language development were discussed in the literature review. Yet by the age of seven less than a third of the sample were still being read to on a daily basis. This was not a chance development. Admission to school seemed to have begun a process whereby the parent felt able to hand over teaching responsibility to the teacher and withdraw from all but directed involvement. This directed involvement centred on the "reading book" with parents now the only adults to listen to children read on an individual basis. The need to turn children into independent readers as quickly as possible, to meet the targets of Key Stage One SATs, fostered parental involvement within the narrow remit of skills acquisition.

Data from parents suggested that admission to school generated different concepts about education. These included the promotion of formal work over play and a greater degree of structure. Activities, which were optional in the Nursery setting, became compulsory and firmly embedded in routine. Parent and teacher expectations of academic achievement were undoubtedly higher and affected the role both were playing in the boys' reading development. An Australian study carried out in 1989 (North & Davies, 1989) looked at teacher response to the introduction of a single intake policy at the age of four years and six months. Evidence from this study showed that teachers expected younger children to adapt to the curriculum of older entrants. Only a small proportion were prepared to adapt the curriculum to the needs

of the youngest cohort. Fifty-one percent of the teachers continued to introduce formal work at the beginning of the year with only 38% introducing play. Parental involvement in these classrooms was also mainly in formal work. Early admission to school did not seem to bring about the necessary changes in curriculum, which would harmonise with the younger entrants. This pattern would seem to be replicated in the Reception classroom with many parents extremely anxious about the demands but at the same time lending support to the formal curriculum.

Parents in this sample were keen observers of their boys' own experiences and there is no doubt that observation of these experiences helped to shape parental attitudes about admission policy independently of external influences and theoretical perspectives. The interviews held with parents prior to their sons' entry to Year One gave some vivid illustration of the contrasting experiences of boys in Nursery and Reception classes. Parents of Nursery class boys were overwhelmingly happy with the pre-school setting, evidence perhaps that in spite of the immense concern with academic standards, their children's happiness rated even more highly. Reception class parents were far more ambivalent, with parents expressing grave reservations about the strain imposed on their sons. The comments were disturbing: they described a group of boys who were struggling to meet expectations, often over tired and frustrated. 'Education' had become work, curtailing the freedom of children to learn through self-motivated activities. Many boys were reluctant to fulfil the tasks they had been set and their behaviour had been observed to deteriorate in the home setting.

Given this experience, it was surprising to find that less than half of the Reception class parents favoured a later entry to school. This proportion remained the same two years later although individual parents had changed their minds. There was no correlation between parental opinion on this issue as expressed at the beginning and end of Key Stage One.

It is difficult to draw conclusions from such divergent opinion but the evidence suggests that parental dissatisfaction among the Nursery class group arose from the feeling that the boys were somehow missing out on school experience and so being disadvantaged. Data from this study suggested that this was a misconception. Results

in terms of reading attitudes and skills have been discussed elsewhere but parents themselves supplied evidence that the Reception class introduction to school failed to ease the transition to Year One. Most of the boys who experienced difficulty in settling into school had come from Reception classes and all had already been described as 'struggling'. Nor did Reception class boys find the process of learning to read any easier or any more enjoyable than their counterparts in Nursery classes.

By the end of Key Stage One there was a clear connection between the children's experience and parental views on age of entry. However the experience drove parental opinion in opposite directions. Parents who believed their sons had started too late were those who had begun school after their fifth birthday. Parents who believed their sons had commenced school too soon were mainly those who had experienced Reception class. Parental opinion remained divided on the issue with about half the sample not satisfied with the system.

15.6. What implications do the findings of this study have for government policies on compulsory age of admission to school?

The lowering of the school age nationally has imposed a greater uniformity on pre-school provision. Where LEAs operate a policy of early admission, parental choice is effectively removed. Placement in Reception is a guarantee of a school place and few parents feel able to take the risk of losing a place by opting for alternatives. These 'decisions', such as they are, are being made on the basis of criteria which look to the future rather than to the immediate needs of the child.

Data from this study has shown that the *de facto* lowering of the school admission age, to four or four and a half, brings with it a radical shift in objectives. The pedagogy of the Reception class teacher moves away from the traditionally child-centred and play-centred pre-school environment and is substituted by the learning goals of Key Stage One. As evinced by the plentiful and heartfelt comments of so

many Reception class parents, the education offered to these boys was certainly a far cry from the ideologies which have governed the Nursery classroom until now.

The impact of school admission policies is complex. The present study, though small, has demonstrated the striking contrast in the experiences of boys who through the chance of geographical location have entered the phase of compulsory schooling in quite different ways. It has highlighted some of the repercussions on parents and on their involvement in their boys' learning. It has failed to find convincing evidence of the advantage of an early introduction into school through Reception classes. The data points to the strength of 'expediency' over 'pedagogy' and government decision over parental choice.

The debate continues to arouse public interest, as reflected in a recent headline in the Times: "Children 'being harmed' by early schooling" (Owen, 2002). The present study has contributed some evidence to this argument by describing specific cases where this harm has been identified and by illustrating the types of processes which lead to these negative outcomes.

The driving force of the argument against early entry to school is generated by the formality of current provision for children prior to the age of five. This formality has been intensified by government directives, in particular, formal assessment at the age of seven and the demands of the National Literacy Strategy as effected through the literacy hour. This study has highlighted the impact of these formal strategies on the way boys think and feel about reading. It has also illustrated how the formality is associated with admission to school. The transition displaces the child-centred focus of pre-school education as developed by its pioneers and as practised in most of Europe. Consequently, it would seem that only by upholding, or perhaps increasing, the statutory age of admission will parents and their children be safeguarded from the erosion of these child-centred ideologies and from the imposition of inappropriate expectations. In this context, Pullman's colourful polemic against the straightjacket of the National Literacy Strategy (Pullman, 2002) is a timely reminder of the inherent

danger of overly formal teaching strategies. In determining policy on age of admission to school, government should take heed of Pullman's warning, widely echoed in the pages of this study: "If joy isn't nourishing the roots of the work, it's never going to show in the flower".

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APPENDIX 1

PILOT STUDY

Section A

A.1.1. Introduction

The research questions addressed in the main study revolve around the focus of attitude toward reading. A rationale for this focus was presented in the literature review, which also gave a portrayal of the historical development of the attitude construct and techniques for its measurement. In spite of recent developments in this area (Chapman & Tunmer, 1995) the study of young children's attitudes toward reading has remained hampered by lack of suitable instrumentation for its measurement. This is partly because the task is a notoriously difficult one, impeded by problems of language and the sometimes fluid status of children's attitudes which can yield unreliable data. The lack of appropriate instruments for employment in the present study was aggravated by the fact that children in Great Britain tend to have their first encounter with 'formal' reading situations far earlier than elsewhere. This means, for example, that instruments designed for use in other countries during children's first year at school have been designed with a sample of six year old children and cannot be employed in British schools where the equivalent introductory stage involves children of four or five.

The pilot study addressed itself to this need by developing suitable instrumentation for the measurement and understanding of attitude toward reading among British school children between the ages of almost five and seven. It sought to develop an instrument for the quantitative measurement of attitude toward reading which differed from the ERAS and PRAS in that it straddled the pre-school and first school years. The pilot study also developed the qualitative methodology to study the cognitive and to some extent the behavioural dimensions of reading attitude. This methodology as adopted in the main study.

A.1.2. Designing an instrument for the measurement of young children's attitude toward reading

A.1.2.1. General principles of design

The reading attitude instrument was designed with a number of important objectives in mind. These objectives were related primarily, although not exclusively, to the age range for which the instrument would be employed in the main study, namely almost five to seven year-olds.

- The instrument should have an appealing presentation and should be simple and unthreatening to its users
- The instrument should not require a child to be able to read
- The instrument should be easy to administer and score
- The results should be both valid and reliable

A.1.2.2. Selection of items for the scale

The selection and refinement of items for inclusion in an attitude scale is a first and vital step in its construction. Oppenheim (Oppenheim, 1992 p.179ff.) presented some of the salient features, which should characterise these statements. The final set of items determines the precise definition of the construct, reflects its varied dimensions and establishes the validity of the instrument. In attitude scales designed for use with children, the original pool of items is normally the result of extensive exploration of the construct either by interviewing the children themselves or using adult statements about children's attitudes. Although guided by such item pools this project replaced the usual set of statements with visual stimuli in the form of photographs and drawings.

A.1.2.3. Rationale for the use of photographs in lieu of statements

The technique of eliciting attitudinal response with photographs as the stimulus seemed to have been used only once in relation to attitudes to reading (Redelheim, 1975). Redelheim's instrument followed principles of projective techniques, which are not applicable to the present study. Here the photographs have been presented in lieu of verbal statements.

Exploratory work with this technique seemed appropriate in the light of the growing familiarity that children have with photographic images, whether through the media, the general environment (advertising etc.) or the increasing use of photography in children's books. This familiarity suggested that young children might find it both easier and more appealing to respond to such stimuli than to oral questions. The technique seemed particularly suited to the age group of the sample, which encompassed many pre-readers. The use of photographs and its corollary, the absence of the written word, also helped to emphasise that the task did not require and had no association with reading skills. Furthermore, the use of photographs was also seen as a way of avoiding the problem of response sets arising from the phrasing of items. Chapman and Tunmer (Chapman & Tunmer, 1995), for instance, described a negative item response phenomenon previously identified by Marsh (Marsh, 1986). This found that children's responses to negatively worded items were inconsistent with their responses to positive items. Chapman and Tunmer experimented with the wording of items by changing statements into questions, a technique that improved the consistency of response between positive and negatively worded items. The adoption of visual stimuli of course by-passed the problems tackled by Chapman and Tunmer in the various experiments reported in their paper (Chapman & Tunmer, 1995).

A.1.2.4. Description of the visual stimuli

Twenty-one visual stimuli were compiled from a number of sources[1]. These consisted of 17 photographs and 4 drawings. The four drawings made up the four initial items in the scale. The drawings depicted four common leisure-time activities, which would be easily recognised by young children; 'drawing/painting', 'playing with a computer', 'playing outdoors' and 'reading/looking at books'. The latter showed one child lying on a bed and another child sitting next to the bed, a reading situation selected in the belief that it would be widely recognised. The first four items thus placed reading in the context of other activities and allowed the child to compare feelings about reading to feelings about other possible activities.

The photographs tried to capture a range of reading situations, which would be familiar to this young age group and reflect the reading situations which were contributing to the formation of their attitude toward reading. The photographer was given explicit criteria to help her identify appropriate reading situations. These criteria were based on McKenna's theoretical model (McKenna, 1995) in which attitude toward reading is influenced by:

a) beliefs associated with 'interaction with others'
b) beliefs about the outcome of reading resulting from a cumulative experience of various reading situations

Guidelines as to these criteria stressed that photographs should reflect reading experiences, which were both significant according to this model and familiar to the children. The final pool of photographs selected for inclusion in the pilot study:

- Reflected reading among children of both genders and various ages
- Included families from different ethnic backgrounds.
- Used home and school settings
- Attempted to encapsulate significant relationships in the reading process:

Eight photographs reflected the interaction of a child with other people representing family members (mother/father/siblings/grandfather), peer group and teachers.

- Reflected a range of reading situations likely to be familiar to children within the almost five to seven age range

The settings were compiled from the analysis of numerous other attitudinal measures and early literacy research literature, supported by knowledge derived from extensive, first-hand professional experience in the teaching of reading. The photographs present a cross-section of situations likely to be familiar to children within this age-range. They included home and school settings; library visits; reading alone and in groups; being read to and browsing; exposure to different types of reading material including comics, 'difficult' books, picture books and information books.

The seventeen photographs and four drawings were photocopied and compiled into a small booklet (Appendix 1, section C). Each stimulus was treated as an item in a reading attitude scale. Attitudinal responses were sought to each item on a scale of one to three in the case of Reception class children and a scale of one to five for children in Years One and Two. Full details of the administration of the test are given in appendix 1, section B.

A.1.2.5. Response scale

A three point Likert-type response scale was adopted in the case of Reception class children. This followed the PRAS (Saracho, 1988) which was designed for a similar age group. Given the very young age of the children it was felt that three responses was the maximum number between which the children could be expected to discriminate. More sophisticated discrimination between four or five points would be confusing and perhaps too demanding for this sample of children. A five-point Likert type scale was adopted for children in Years One and Two. The intention was to pick up shades of attitude, which might go unobserved in a simple three-point scale. This also gave children the opportunity to give a neutral response should they wish to do so. This also made the scale more comparable to the one adopted for Reception class children.

[1] The drawings were commissioned for this project and produced by a student of graphic design. The photographs were partly commissioned to a professional photographer. Some photographs appeared in The Times, 22.6.96.

A.1.2.6. Administration of scale

Reception class

Each child was seen individually within or just outside the classroom. I was introduced as somebody interested in children and their reading. Prior to commencing, I spent a little time with each child setting them at their ease and ensuring that the child was happy to work with me. So as not to prejudice the result, each child was made aware that no reading skills were necessary and that I was interested in ideas and feelings. Particular emphasis was placed on the fact that there were no right or wrong answers. Administration of the test took about 15 minutes. The test was administered twice with an interval of seven to ten days between test and re-test.

Years One and Two

In view of time constraints, tests were administered to all children in pairs. The same photographs were not presented simultaneously so that children could not be influenced by each others' responses. A five-point response scale was adopted. The test was administered twice with an interval of seven to ten days. Time of administration was slightly shorter than for Reception class children (about ten minutes).

A.1.3. The sample

The pilot study set out to develop a valid and reliable instrument for the measurement of children's attitude toward reading as they enter a formal educational setting. The sample of 90 children ranged between the ages of four and seven, and included children from Reception, Year One and Year Two. The children were selected from two schools in the Local Education Authority of Harrow. One Special Needs Reception child was unable to follow the instructions required for the test and this data set was excluded. Further data were lost by children being absent on either the first or second occasion of testing. Data for 77 children was included in the final analysis.

School 1: Thirty Reception class children chosen from two parallel classes. Class teachers selected the children to include a range of ethnic backgrounds and ability, according to teacher assessment, and both genders.
School 2: A complete Year One and Year Two class selected by the headteacher from a three-class intake.

A.1.4. Results

The final version of the instrument consisted of 20 items. Photograph No. 2 was removed early in the course of the testing as it was persistently interpreted as a non-reading situation. The scores for this item were ignored in the final analysis.

Although children in Years One and two had been asked to respond on a five point scale, scores were collapsed to a three-point scale for the analysis. This was done partly because some Year One children found it difficult to recall the differentiation between the five responses and partly to enable a more direct comparison to be made between all three classes.

Seventeen items were reading related (16 photographs and one drawing). The range of possible scores lay between 17 and 51 with the higher scores indicating more positive attitudes toward reading.

The reading attitude score was derived by calculating the total score of each of the 17 reading- related items. Since an additional photograph was added during testing, calculations utilising raw scores had to be calculated separately for the first 28 subjects, Reception class children, whose responses were based on 16 items.

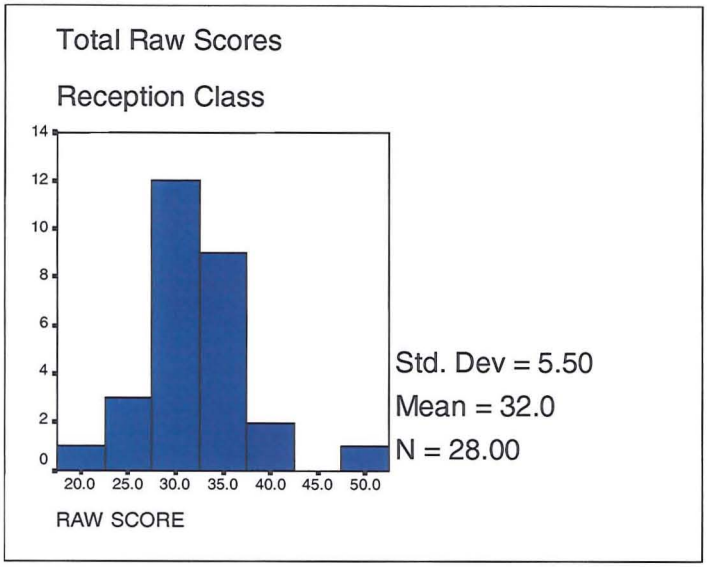

Figure A.1.1 Distribution of scores for Reception class

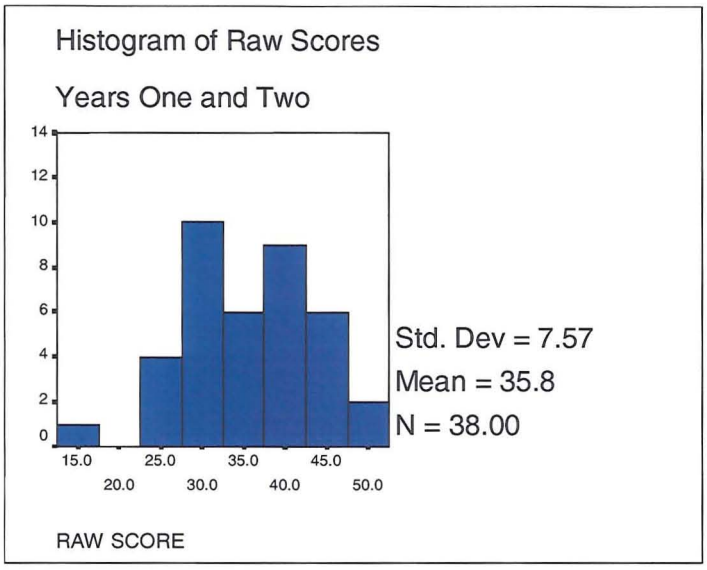

Figure A.1.2. Distribution of scores in Years One and Two

Since the number of items on the scale differed for children in Reception class, no direct comparison could be made using raw scores. The data set was therefore amalgamated using a scale of one to five. Table A.1.1. demonstrates how the scale was applied to the raw scores.

Class	Raw score range	Coded 1	Coded 2	Coded 3	Coded 4	Coded 5
Reception	16-48	16-21	22-28	29-35	36-42	43-48
Years 1 & 2	17-51	17-23	24-30	31-37	38-44	44-51

Table A.1.1. Raw scores coded on a scale of 1-5

Figure 10 below presents the distribution of reading attitude scores as measured on the 5-point scale. The distribution showed a slightly positive skew reflecting a recognised tendency towards positive attitudinal responses in young children. Nevertheless, the distribution confirmed that the scale measured a range of attitudes within the sample.

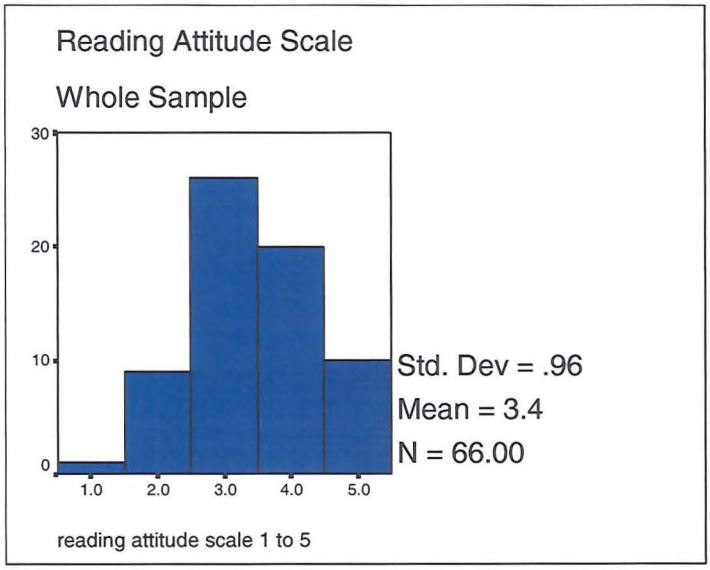

Figure A.1.3. Distribution of scores across entire sample

A.1.4.1. Reliability

Item-analysis

The employment of external criteria to measure the reliability of each item as a measure of the underlying attitude is beset by a number of problems. According to Oppenheim (1992), " Such external criteria are...almost never available." The option of adopting an external judge, teacher or parent, is highly questionable. There is little evidence to

suggest that such measures will themselves be reliable. Oppenheim suggests that the purification of the total item pool is probably the best available measure and will at least ensure that the items are homogeneous and consistent.

A reliability analysis was carried out on the 17 items presented to the children. Since item 17 had not been presented to all subjects on the first test, the re-test data set was employed for this analysis. Three items fell below the 0.3 item to scale correlation, a score which De Vaus suggests is too low a reliability for inclusion in a scale (De Vaus, 1996). An alpha score of 0.82 was obtained suggesting that the item pool was cohesive and measured a single underlying construct.

Test-retest reliability

Seventy seven of the original 90 subjects were re-tested after an interval of between seven and ten days. A reliability analysis using Pearson's correlation coefficient was carried out for each of the classes separately. Raw scores were used throughout. except, in the case of the Reception class, where raw scores were converted to a total reading attitude score. This was necessitated by the change in the number of items between test and re-test. As mentioned earlier one item was removed as it proved to be an inadequate representation of a reading experience.

The following Pearson's correlation coefficients were obtained:

Reception class	(0.80 p< .03)	Raw scores (N 7)
Reception class	(0.63 p<.000)	Reading attitude score (N28)
Year One	(0.73 p<.000)	Raw score (N24)
Year Two	(0.60 p<.001)	Raw score (N25)
Whole sample	(0.64 p=.000)	Raw score (N77)

A.1.4.2. Discussion of results

Item analysis

Three items (4B, 5B and 13B) were found to have correlations below 0.3 and therefore, under normal procedures, subject to exclusion. Of these, item 4B was retained, given a correlation only marginally below the recommended figure (0.289).
Item 13B would seem to be measuring an important if distinct dimension of reading attitude, namely the reading of comics. Evidence for this dimension emerged from data collected from tape-recordings. Most children recognised comics as a distinctive type of reading and the low correlation was considered likely to be a reflection of distinctive attitudinal trends associated with this type of reading. For this reason, it was considered important to retain the item within the scale. The exclusion of this item would certainly restrict the nature of the underlying construct which was being subject to measurement.

The low correlation of item 5B was surprising given that this should have represented a library visit and therefore likely to be a good indicator of reading attitude. Analysis of the tape-recordings did not find fault with the photograph itself. Most children recognised the situation as one where children were selecting or looking at books. The term library was frequently employed. The issue was not therefore one of item definition or clarity. However, initial qualitative analysis suggested that children who seemed to have a positive attitude toward reading did not necessarily enjoy the process of choosing books. This seemed to offer some explanation for the low correlation of this with other items. Again, the decision was taken not to discard this item on the basis that it accurately represented an important reading experience in the lives of young children. Attitudinal response in this area may represent a distinctive dimension in reading attitude. Further qualitative analysis is planned in the main study to throw more light on this dimension of children's reading experience.

Reliability

Two types of statistical test were applied to the data set to establish the reliability of the instrument. An item analysis reliability test yielded an Alpha value of 0.82 and test re-test ranged from Pearson values of 0.60 in Year 2 to 0.79 in Reception.

Reliability of this test in terms of internal consistency was therefore well established. The Alpha value of 0.82 suggested that the pool of items identified an underlying construct.

The test-re-test results gave a less clear picture. Opinions differ as to what can be considered an acceptable correlation figure. Rust and Golombok (1989) put forward different reliabilities for different types of test, expecting reliabilities of 0.7 and over for attitudinal tests. Oppenheim suggested that reliabilities below 0.8 are a problem. Given these guidelines it would appear that the test-retest reliability for both the Reception class and Year One would be acceptable.

The lower reliability scores in Year 2 are interesting given the widely held belief that attitudes among young children are notoriously volatile. One would therefore have expected a higher reliability score with increasing age of subjects. The contrary results obtained would lead one to conclude that a problem has arisen through one of the changes arising in either the test or its administration when trialled on the different year groups.

1. Years One and Two were asked to select responses on a five-point scale. Although for the sake of analysis this was collapsed to a three-point scale, the subjects may have become confused by the alternatives and not paid due consideration to the selection itself. Prior to re-test all children were asked to explain the scaling system. Although comparison in recall was not measured, the tester did note a more confused recall among children responding on the five-point scale.

2. Years One and Two were tested in pairs not as in Reception on a one-to-one basis. The reason for this method of testing was a practical one and proved somewhat unsatisfactory. Children's comments and actions suggested that there was a certain amount of support sought from the accompanying child, which led to responses which were unlikely to be valid. Intervention from the tester attempted to minimise this problem but there is no doubt that some responses were not 'valid'.

3. The test was administered in two different schools with lower reliabilities in the second school.

The results point to the need for certain adjustments to be made to the test and its administration. In particular the test should be administered individually and a three-point scale needs to be adopted. Given these modifications Years One and Two should achieve reliability scores as high or higher than those obtained in the Reception year.

Direction and size of changes

Although an analysis of correlations produced an overall reliability score, the score did not give an indication of the direction or size of changes which occurred between the tests. Understanding the nature of the changes, however, is critical in determining the potential use of the instrument. If scores change dramatically between test and re-test, use of the instrument becomes less straightforward.

Table A.1.3. lists raw scores in all cases where there was a change in overall reading attitude score on a three point rating scale.

time 1	time 2	Y^2	change	time 1	time 2	Y	change	time 1	time 2	Y	change
32	41	R	+9	43	37	1	-6	38	48	2	+10
33	41	R	+8	42	33	1	-9	37	42	2	+5
32	22	R	-10	39	34	1	-5				
22	34	R	+12	28	21	2	-7				
33	42	R	+9	32	43	2	+11				
34	44	R	+10	35	41	2	+6				
34	22	1	-12	39	36	2	-3				
38	48	1	+10	32	43	2	+11				
43	35	1	-8	33	25	2	-8				
44	36	1	-8	48	29	2	-19				

Table A.1.3. Direction and size of changes in attitude between test and re-test

In all there were 22 changes, affecting approximately a quarter of the sample. The majority of these changes occurred from the middle range. The direction of changes was equally distributed, with six changes occurring in the Reception class, seven in Year One and nine in Year Two. There was only one case reflecting complete instability when the score fluctuated from 29 to 48.

The fluidity was more marked at the positive end of the scale and the pattern which emerged suggested that middle range scores would need careful interpretation in any future study. While the underlying attitudes tended to remain the same, the scores suggested fluctuation in the strength with which these attitudes were expressed.

Item consistency

One of the arguments put forward against the use of a global attitude score is the potential lack of consistency in individual items even in cases where the overall score is reliable. In order to explore this sort of variation correlations were calculated for all items included at both tests when the overall raw score was consistent. This analysis indicated a high degree of consistency in the items. Only two items fell as low as 0.4 and half the items above 0.79.

Validity

The issue of validity in attitude scales has never been fully resolved. Since attitude and behaviour cannot be safely equated there is no obvious index with which to compare the attitudinal measure obtained. Teachers and parents have frequently been employed as external assessors of attitude in such scales but this too is subject to question. Judgements are likely to be inferred on the basis of only partial information. Both parents and teachers make judgements of children's attitude in a restricted setting and may well not reach the same conclusions.

The issue of validity will be explored further in the main study. Although no single comparison will yield definitive validation, the scores of this scale will be compared to other data exploring children's attitudes. These will include scores of the PRAS, qualitative data from parents obtained by interview, and qualitative data collected from children in which they explored the photographic stimuli. The PRAS was designed for pre-school children and consists of fewer items. One might expect some degree of correlation with the photographic scale. A partial correlation would suggest that the photographic scale does indeed measure an underlying attitudinal construct. Similarly, one would expect parental assessments of children's attitudes to have some relationship to children's self-expressed attitude. While recognising its limitations, triangulation of this nature might again contribute a degree of evidence for the validity of the scale. Finally, the main study will explore children's beliefs about reading by using the

[2] Y indicates Year group

photographs as stimuli for talk. The technique is described in some detail in the next section. While the technique did not focus specifically on exploring children's individual attitudes toward reading, the pilot study illustrated that some evidence of these attitudes was reflected in the data. The main study will strengthen the validation of the instrument by using these three approaches.

Content Validity

Content validity of the photographs was tested by collecting tape recordings from a sample of children across the age spectrum These children were shown the photographs and asked to "tell a story" about the photograph. This data indicated that the photographs did indeed represent the situations they were designed to portray in all but a few cases.

A.1.4.3. Summary of results

The results obtained suggest that the attitude test developed in the pilot study met the criteria set out at its commencement although some modifications of the instrument should improve its reliability.

The test was simple to administer and had great appeal to the children who participated in the study. The use of stickers for the scaling system was a technique, which proved to be very popular with the children and easily understood. The test was found to have a high internal consistency. Content validity of the items was strong.

Although test-test reliability fell within the acceptable spectrum some changes have been suggested and will be implemented in the main study:

- The instrument will be individually administered
- All children will be asked to score their response on a three-point scale

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A.1.5. Exploring children's beliefs about reading

A.1.5.1. Theoretical background

The intrinsic relationship between attitude and beliefs has been recognised in every description of the attitude construct. Historically beliefs have in fact been an integrated component of attitude, frequently referred to as its cognitive element. The present study has chosen to work within the theoretical framework proposed by Matthewson (Mathewson, 1994) where beliefs about reading are interpreted to represent the cognitive and behavioural components of reading attitude. It has also incorporated MCKenna's framework acknowledging the impact of the environment on the development of reading attitudes. These models were described in some detail in the literature review and have been adopted as a guiding framework for the main study.

The objective of the pilot study was to develop a methodology for the exploration of beliefs about reading among young children.

A.1.5.2. Rationale for a qualitative methodology

Creswell (Creswell, 1998) put forward a number of reasons for the adoption of a qualitative methodology. Two of his criteria were of particular relevance to the development of this pilot study:

- The nature of the research question

"In a qualitative study, the research question often starts with a *how* or a *what* so that initial forays into the topic describe what is going on" (Creswell, 1998 p.17). The underlying research question asks about the nature of the beliefs held by young children about reading. The pilot study set out to look for a methodology, which might help to illuminate these beliefs.

- The need to present a detailed view of the topic

In the main study the qualitative data will combine with quantitative data to build a detailed picture of children's attitudes incorporating beliefs about reading in different contexts and how they change over time. It is hoped that the qualitative data will enhance our understanding of the relationships, which underlie the emergence of reading attitudes

A.1.5.3. Procedure for data collection

Qualitative studies must adopt data collection procedures which are as rigorous as those expected of quantitative studies. This pilot study was designed to develop such procedures. It set out to find out whether a particular methodology would yield useful insights into young children's beliefs about reading. Access to these beliefs was complicated by a number of factors:

- the young age of the sample
- the limited time obtainable with individual children
- the abstract nature of the data being sought

It was felt that direct interviewing of the subjects would be too demanding and unlikely to be fruitful. Both language skills and concentration were felt to be a likely stumbling block to the collection of useful data. Although qualitative research is often and ideally characterised by extensive time in the field, access to children in this project was severely limited. These factors precluded many of the more common methodologies of data collection normally associated with qualitative research.

The pilot study did not set out to find a comprehensive and definitive set of beliefs. This was precluded by the small size of the sample involved and the limited number of photographs employed. Within these constraints, it sought to establish whether this particular methodology might have the potential to offer a rich source of data with which to explore the beliefs children hold about the process of reading and about the role and expectations of others in this process.

A.1.5.4. The sample

The sample consisted of ten children[3] between the ages of five and seven years of age. Six children were seen in school, four at home. Prior permission for involvement in the study had been gained from school and parents.

A.1.5.5. The data

Children were presented with ten photographs depicting various reading situations they were likely to have encountered. These photographs were selected from the instrument described in the first half of this pilot study and reflected familiar reading experiences in a number of different contexts and settings. The children were told that the photographs they would be shown all had something to do with children and books. Each photograph was presented in turn and children were asked to "tell a story" about it. If children offered no response the following prompts were used: "I want you to tell me about the children in the photograph. Who do you think they might be? What do you think they might be doing/thinking/feeling?" Every effort was made to avoid direct questioning which might lead children to offer expected answers, as phrased by Holmes: "The key is to avoid misleading questions or getting the children to say what you want to hear" (Holmes, 1998 p.23).

The value of eliciting attitudes through stories has been identified in other research. "Story telling allows children to express themselves more honestly because they are not asked to talk about themselves" (Davis, 1998 p.12). Moreover, they elicited a picture of "the child's reality, to the extent that a person cannot write outside of either their experience or imagination" (Davis, 1998p.12). The stories constituted valuable data to gain insight into the children's attitudes incorporating beliefs.

[3] Although 11 children were seen one tape-recording was inaudible and could not be used in analysis

The sessions, which lasted between 10 and 15 minutes each were tape-recorded and subsequently transcribed.

A.1.5.6.Analysis of the data: initial coding structure

According to Miles and Huberman "coding is analysis" (Miles & Huberman, 1994 p.56). McKenna's model (McKenna, 1995) provided the framework for the coding structure but codes were not formulated prior to analysis of the text. The codes were thus primarily empirically driven.

The ten transcripts were coded sentence by sentence. Since this was viewed as an exploratory coding structure inter-coder agreement was not sought. Coding categories were developed only in cases where there were felt to be at least two supporting references. This initial coding structure (table A.1.4.) allowed text units to be placed in more than one category simultaneously.

Code	**Description of code**	**Definition** Text units which include information on the following:
A	Child's beliefs about and/or attitude toward teacher	How the child views the role/expectations of the teacher in the reading process and the child's feelings associated with this
B	Child's beliefs about and/or attitude toward parent	How the child views the parental role/parental expectation in the reading process and the child's feelings toward interaction with the parent in this role

C	Child's beliefs about and/or attitude toward reading	How the child describes a range of reading activities, including the function of these activities and their own feelings toward them
D	Child's beliefs about and/or attitude toward other adults	All references to adults other than parent and teacher
E	Personal comments	All references in which child relates the photograph specifically to own experience. These comments may include expression of attitudes
F	Functions of reading	Text units where child makes reference to the function/purpose of reading
G	Places for reading	All references to locations where children read
H	Texts	References to different types of reading material
I	Source of reading material	References to where children obtain their reading material
K	Literacy activities	References literacy activities other than reading

Table A.1.4. Coding derived from first analysis of text

A.1.5.7. Interaction with others in the reading process

McKenna identified a set of beliefs among children associated with their interactions with others in the reading process. He defined these as "Beliefs about the expectations of others in light of one's motivation to conform to those expectations" (McKenna, 1995 p.940). The codes assigned as A-D seemed to reflect a similar set of beliefs.
The text coded as A-D was analysed in greater depth to try to establish the distinguishing and unifying features of these codes.
"Interaction with others in the reading process" was widely interpreted by the children to include both adults and children of both genders. The analysis identified the following as actively engaged with the child in the reading process: mother, father, grandfather, uncle, teacher, librarian, peer group (brother, cousins, friends, pupils). The transcripts offered data which made it possible to analyse the type of belief held by children about both the reader and the particular individual participating in the reading process. The analysis focuses on two types of interaction exploring the beliefs held by children about how the reader interacts with parents and teachers.

A.1.5.7.1. Interaction with parents

A reference to one or other parent can be found in at least one transcript relating to each photograph although the majority of these references relate to one particular photograph. In nine out of ten transcripts photograph 15 was interpreted as mother and child reading together. Few references were found to father in the data. However, this is likely to be a reflection of the specific photographs used in the pilot study. The analysis explored beliefs held by children arising from the parent-child interaction focusing on the role played by mother in the reading process.

Beliefs about parental role were extracted from the data and categorised as follows:

- The interaction is motivated by the enjoyment of both parties. The child believes that the parent views enjoyment as the primary function of reading. Both mother and child find shared reading a highly enjoyable and interesting activity
- Mother takes on a teaching role in the child's process of learning to read
- Mother is guided by the demands of teacher/school and shares the teacher role
- Mother uses books as a tool of information with her child
- Mother/father is viewed as a facilitator/supporter of reading; the child recognises that the mother organises reading experiences for him/her

A.1.5.7.2. Implications of children's beliefs about the parental role

The categorisation of children's beliefs was formulated on the basis of descriptive criteria in answer to the question of how and why parents were interacting with children in the reading process. On its own, this categorisation did not reflect the dynamic of the interaction between parent and child. This dynamic constitutes an important element of McKenna's typology of beliefs in which children's beliefs of parental expectations are influenced by the "judged desirability of the outcome" and by individual "motivations to conform to those expectations". The beliefs were de-personalised and this was the direct result of the way data was collected. Children were not directed toward personal interpretations of the photographs. An interpretative approach to the data was adopted to try to understand these expectations.

This approach was developed on certain assumptions:

1. The role taken on by parents is inextricably bound with his/her expectations

For example, the child who describes the role of the parent primarily in instructional terms recognises the specifically learning-oriented expectations of the parent even though these may not be recognised in detail in the data.

2. The data could yield information about children's perceptions of parental expectations which may not reflect the actual expectations of parents

For example: the mother who is viewed as enjoying the process of shared reading with her child may have expectations of which the child is entirely unaware, such as improving the child's ability to read.

A.1.5.7.3 Summary: parental interaction

While acknowledging the limitation set by the size of the pilot sample, the transcripts yielded a considerable body of data reflecting children's understanding of the interaction between mother and child in the reading process. The data reflected significant and systematic variation in the way children portrayed the parental role. These variations seemed to reflect differences in the way children perceived parental expectations. The roles and the expectations they harbour seemed to be based on children's personal experience. In many cases the child acknowledged a personal identification with the data or included details which were clearly derived from first-hand experience. One child referred to the various levels of readers in the classroom, with precise detail. The data lacked personal reflections by the children. This was perhaps the result of an over-cautious approach to the data collection, designed to avoid directing children toward known categories of response. Although data was sufficient to build abstract categories of beliefs, it precluded a more personal investigation of an individual's set of beliefs. These could be surmised in only a limited way through an interpretative approach to the data.

A.1.5.7.4. Interaction with teachers

The Data

Data reflecting the perception of the teacher's role was more erratic than that appertaining to parents. Several photographs did not elicit any comments about the teacher role. In a similar pattern to that observed in the analysis of the beliefs about the parental role, comments were most highly concentrated around one particular photograph (photo 9). All recognised the adult as a teacher except for one who recognised her as a librarian. One tape-recording was inaudible.

The pattern of response was probably a reflection of the selection of photographs and would almost certainly emerge differently should more or a different set of photographs be presented to the children. Given the small data set, the analysis was undertaken with the knowledge that the data could offer only a partial picture of children's beliefs about the interaction with teachers, involved in the process of reading.

Coding the data

The same procedures were adopted as those described in section A.1.3.4. The following categories emerged from the data:

- The teacher views reading as a useful tool: reading keeps the child quiet, reading is offered as an activity to be carried out independently when a child has finished his/her work
- The teacher makes reading a compulsory activity sometimes to be carried out at home
- The teacher guides the choice of reading giving his/her approval
- The teacher structures reading time (some children view the opportunity as a privilege, they initiate the request, while others view it more negatively as an imposed structure)
- The teacher has to ensure that children listen to and understand the story
- Children's response to reading can affect the teacher

- The teacher has a role to play in teaching children about books
- The teacher has a well defined role as a story reader associated with clear routines and expectations (sitting on the carpet, expect attentiveness)

Discussion of data

The limited scope of this data set precluded the drawing of any conclusive picture of children's beliefs about teachers' role and teachers' expectations as reflected by and through this role. The nature of the perceptions coded above may exclusively be the result of the photographic stimuli adopted. However, the methodology was successful in so far as it did yield data indicating that children seem to hold a set of beliefs associated specifically with their interaction with teachers.
The stark contrast in the nature of these perceptions when compared to those elicited in relation to the parental role posed a number of questions. Inferences drawn from both the data and its gaps suggested several leads, which might usefully be followed in the main study:

1. This data set suggested that children have a very limited view of the teacher's role. Although she guided the choice of books and made time for reading, little reference was made to a wider role in the process of reading. One child mentioned the need for teachers to ensure comprehension but in the ten transcripts the term "help" is used only in relation to parent, grandparent and school helper. It did not appear with any of the teacher-related references

- Does the child view the teacher as someone who helps the children to learn to read and, if so, how?
- What is the child's awareness of teachers' expectations in this area?

2. No references were made to the teacher's enjoyment or interest in the books which she shared with the children at story time or in those which children were required to read to themselves at home.

- ❖ Are teachers perceived to share the same enjoyment of reading, which some children clearly associate with the parental role?

3. The data suggested a well-shared knowledge of the story-time routine. Several children referred to reading as a time-filler, an activity, which occurs after main events, or a free-time option selected by some.

- ❖ What beliefs do children have about the reasons behind reading sessions in school?

4. The data suggested that teachers played a role in selecting books but gave very little information as to how they thought this was done. In one case the process was viewed as one of monitoring the level of reading. This stood in contrast to references made about the process with other people. One child explained that an uncle had chosen a book because he had known it to be the child's favourite : a grandfather had agreed to read because *"the child likes those sorts of books"* ; a mother and son liked the library books so much that "by the end of the day they had already read them 10 times"

- ❖ Do children's beliefs about teachers include any perception of teachers' own attitudes toward books?

A.1.5.7.5. Summary: interaction with teachers

Children's beliefs about the teacher's role in the reading process did emerge as a set of beliefs distinctly characterised from the beliefs that were associated with the parent role. However, the size of the data set was too small to draw any far reaching conclusions about the nature of those beliefs. The data indicated the need for further exploration of this sort. Such data might help to foster our understanding of children's perceptions about their teachers, perceptions which will mould the beliefs they hold about themselves as readers and thereby influence their attitude toward reading

The limited selection of photographs and the small number of children involved in the pilot study necessarily limited the scope of its exploration. However, the nature of the data produced suggested that the use of photographs selected from the attitude measurement instrument will enable the researcher to significantly expand our understanding of the beliefs that children hold about others in the reading process. The data suggested that the selection of the photographs might benefit from some modification to ensure a greater range of responses. In particular additional stimuli reflecting the child-teacher interaction would help to enhance our understanding of children's related beliefs.

A.1.6. Experiences with reading

The initial coding of the transcripts suggested that a significant segment of the data reflected reading experiences of children that did not involve other people. These experiences included the types of reading material the children had come across, knowledge of its source and the experiences of reading in different environments. The analysis identified a range of these experiences and went on to explore children's beliefs about them. These beliefs were identified with the "beliefs about outcomes of reading " in McKenna's theoretical framework. At no stage in the analysis were the experiences cited by children thought to reflect a comprehensive picture of their reading-related experiences. Moreover, although the collection of data was clearly guided and influenced by the choice of photographs, the range and variety of responses suggested that these were not constrained by the photographic stimuli.

Library visits

Library visits were an experience mentioned by all but one of the sample. The data suggested that the children shared a knowledge about libraries which seemed to come from first-hand experience. This was evident from the details of the children's descriptions which included comments about library rules, names of particular local

libraries and information as to how libraries function. There was consistent evidence that children in this sample understood the nature of a library as a resource, a place where one chooses and borrows books.

Patterns of beliefs about reading emerged within the references to library visits. These beliefs frequently alluded to the purposes/functions of reading. For some children the library visit was viewed primarily in terms of the enjoyment of books. Children's terminology was quite consistent. Those children reported that libraries are for children who *"like books"* and that children gain pleasure of varying degree through library visits. The visits were facilitated by adults but included a high degree of child motivation. In the case of one child no evidence suggested that enjoyment was either a function or outcome of reading. This absence of reference to "reading for enjoyment" applied to the description of the library visit but was a characteristic of the entire transcript. The library visit was placed in a school setting, was a teacher-directed activity and although the child set out to find "an interesting book" she required teacher approval of the choice. The transcript of another child shared similar characteristics; no explicit reference was made to reading as an enjoyable activity. Similar terminology was used; the children were looking for "interesting" books. Although the shared terminology might be coincidental, it could reflect strong teacher guidance and a neutral stance towards book choice.

A model for analysis

Although the data set relating to library visits was too small to offer detailed descriptions of an individual's beliefs, it suggested that data obtained in these transcripts contained sufficient useful material for analysis within a simple structure. This structure could be applied to all data coded as "reading experiences":

- Data is coded under category of "reading experiences"
- Patterns of description about "reading experiences"
  (Knowledge about library as evinced in text units)
- Types of beliefs emerging from these descriptions are identified
  (Beliefs about the function of library visits)

- Comparison of patterns of beliefs emerging from different "reading experiences"

Choice of text

All children in the sample could differentiate between different reading material and recognised the process of choice in reading matter. There were varying degrees of sophistication in the way choices were made. Some children referred to pictures as the key criterion in the choice of a book. One child used pictures but also scanned the text: "They read bits of the story but not the whole thing". One child spoke of choosing a book according to the correct level. Important distinctions emerged between children not only in the criteria they employed to select books but also as to whom was in charge of those criteria.

Various genres of reading material were recognised. These included information books, humorous and scary books, books in varying formats (pull-outs and pop-ups), fairy tales and comics. In some cases genre was associated with a particular function such as gaining more knowledge about a subject

Inferring children's beliefs through choice of text

Although data revealed a range of knowledge about different genres, there were few clues as to the beliefs children associated with them. Analysis suggested that further collection of data in this area would have to be more highly directed. While the photographs provided plenty of opportunity for children to mention the genres, there was little spontaneous mention of the possible function of these genres or of other beliefs associated with them. There was insufficient data for analysis along the lines of that carried out with data relating to library visits.

A.1.7. The functions of reading

Children's beliefs about reading are closely associated with the functions they attach to them. A number of studies have addressed the question of how children view these functions (Neuman, 1980; Greany & Neuman, 1990) but these studies have been conducted with older children.

In the initial stage of coding the transcripts, numerous references seemed to relate to these functions. "Reading experiences" were partly characterised by the function ascribed to them so, for instance, reading as a leisure time activity was characterised predominantly by the "enjoyment" function.

Eight children acknowledged reading as a leisure time activity whose primary function is enjoyment. The data suggested a range in the strength of this enjoyment through the frequency of references and a qualitative analysis of the descriptive vocabulary. Child 1 :*"Whenever he had spare time he started reading a book"*; child 2: *"They liked it so much":* child 3: *"They like reading very much"*.

Three children presented very different perspectives on the function of reading. These perspectives seemed to be associated with a different emphasis on function. Child 3 suggested that reading is an activity which can be carried out if you are *"bored"*. There is a strong implication in the transcript that reading occurs if there is nothing better to do. This interpretation of the text is supported by the complete absence of positive comments in the vein of those quoted earlier. This child refers to reading as *"work"* and the role of the mother is to *"help"*. Child 7 is also characterised by an absence of reference to self-motivated reading. Instead reading has a flavour of work. It is teacher-directed: the child has to read a book *"because his teacher told him"*. Reading is set as homework and grandpa is *"helping"* the child to read. As far as this child is concerned the primary function of reading would appear to be the fulfilment of expectations of others.

A.1.7.1. Summary

The analysis of all transcripts led to the identification of five functions:

1. Enjoyment
2. Satisfying parental or teacher demands
3. Learning how to read
4. To gain information/knowledge/pursue a personal interest
5. Relieve boredom

The transcripts suggested that children's beliefs were characterised by the dominance of the particular type of function they ascribed to reading. So, for instance, children who viewed reading as primarily an activity pursued for the sake of enjoyment, tended to interpret most reading situations/experiences in this light. "Outcomes of reading" and the "expectations of others" were coloured by the dominant function. This interpretation of the data was based on the consistency of response found by the same children to different photographic stimuli. The children in this sample tended to be characterised by the dominance of a belief in a specific function of reading. A clear distinction of this nature may not hold true for broader samples. The pilot study has identified a range of beliefs about the function of reading and in so doing endorsed the methodology adopted for the exploration of these beliefs. The main study will adopt this qualitative methodology to further explore young children's beliefs about the function of reading and investigate the contexts in which these beliefs develop.

A.1.8. Individual profiles of children

The focus of analysis in the pilot study has been on the identification of sets of beliefs which constitute a component of attitude. The data were also analysed in order to develop a structure of analysis which would yield individual profiles of children's attitudes toward and beliefs about reading. This objective was intended to provide

qualitative data which might enhance our understanding of the quantitative data collected during the two-year longitudinal study, in particular the attitudinal scores.

Coding of the transcripts led to the formation of five categories of analysis:

1. The terminology of individual transcripts

❖ Were there recurring or dominant features in the terminology of the transcripts?

❖ Did these features suggest any qualitative difference in the way children demonstrated their beliefs about reading?

2. The child's beliefs about interaction with others

❖ Were the interactions characterised by distinctive individual qualities?

3. Functions of reading

❖ How did the individual child express his beliefs about the function of reading?

4. Knowledge and experience of reading

❖ What type of experience with and knowledge about reading was demonstrated by the child?

5. Affective dimensions

❖ Did personal comments and reflections in the text reflect the child's own attitude toward reading?

A.1.8.1. Summary: individual profiles of children

The analysis of the transcripts demonstrated that the methodology can yield significant and helpful data about individual children. However, some of the understanding of this data is interpretative. Conclusions were drawn on the basis of the seeming dominance of particular beliefs or the re-iteration of attitudinal statements. However, the transcripts were not the result of direct interviews with children and the analysis acknowledged that beliefs or attitudes ascribed to other children (ie. those in the photographs) may not reflect the child's own beliefs and attitudes. This posed particular problems in terms of making any certain assessment of children's own attitudes and suggested that some modification to the methodology might be helpful in obtaining more personal statements from the children.

A.1.9. Conclusion

Miles and Huberman reviewed the arguments for and against prior instrumentation in the design of a study (Miles & Huberman, 1994 p.35-36). The focus on instrumentation behind this pilot study was driven by a number of concerns:

1. The age of the sample; young children may not respond well to interviewing in the absence of any obvious focus
2. The time constraints; access to children was limited given the size of the sample and their geographical distribution
3. The abstract nature of the concepts being investigated
4. The adoption of a non-standard methodology of data collection in the absence of suitable standardised tests and in order to be responsive to individual differences

The range of data collected suggested that the methodology was generally successful. On the whole children did not find the task too arduous (although some needed more extensive prompting) and the data collected could be successfully analysed in a number of different ways, even with a very small sample. Most of sessions were conducted in the classroom or in a nearby room so that the children did not experience any anxiety. Consultation with the teacher and the child ensured that the location met with the approval of all concerned.

Inevitably the study encountered some of the general problems associated with interviewing children (Holmes, 1998). Noise levels combined with the very quiet voices of some children meant that some data on tape-recordings were lost. Note-taking was felt to be distracting for the child. This procedure was not adopted: instead the researcher repeated what the child had said in as unobtrusive and affirming manner as possible. Interruptions from other inquisitive children were sometimes also a distraction.

While meeting many of its objectives, the pilot study also indicated that certain modifications in the methodology would be helpful.

The introduction of more personal probes within the story-telling structure was likely to lead to a more valid view of children's own beliefs and attitudes and of their view of themselves as readers. The pilot study had to depend largely on interpretative techniques to assess these.

The photographic stimuli

The choice of stimuli clearly affected the type of data collected. Careful consideration to the composition of the set of photographs led to some changes in the choice for the main study. This choice need not remain rigid and should retain the same sort of fluidity as reflected in semi-structured interviews

There was a significant range in the quality and quantity of data collected from individual children. These were associated with age and with the verbal ability of children. This variation was not seen as a problem associated specifically with this methodology. This issue was raised by Holmes (Holmes, 1998 p.23) "Language competency varies greatly among children, and I try to tailor my questions and answers around the child's language abilities". Of course, equivalent variation is found in data collected through interviews with adults and may lead to an absence of data which must be borne in mind in the analysis of the main study

Given the small sample size data in the pilot study was coded manually. The main study used the computer software passage QSR Nud*ist 4.

The main study reflected these concerns by revising the methodology in the areas outlined above and by retaining a fluid approach to the methodology, which continued to allow modifications where these were deemed appropriate.

Section B

ADMINISTRATION OF READING ATTITUDE TEST DURING PILOT STUDY

- Materials

A booklet consisting of four drawings portraying a child/children engaged in four different activities:

1. Arts and crafts
2. Playing with a computer
3. Leisure reading
4. Playing outside[4]

and 16 photographs portraying reading situations

A set of each of three[5] types of stickers, black white and gold representing the scale as follows:

I do not like/enjoy	Black sticker	Score 1
I don't mind	White sticker	Score 2
I like/enjoy	Gold sticker	Score 3

Answer sheets

- Administration

---

[1] Two further stickers were used with Years One and Two but the results of the pilot test suggested these were not helpful. A grey sticker represented feelings which were not as negative as black but nevertheless

The test was administered to each child individually or in pairs. The tester followed these procedures:

1. Introduction of test to the child/children

The objective was to set the child at ease and assure him/her that there were no right or wrong answers. The test was introduced as follows:

" I am going to show you some pictures and ask you a few questions. There are no right and wrong answers because I am looking for your own ideas about the pictures. It doesn't matter whether you can read or not"

2. Explaining the scaling system

" If you are allowed to do anything you want, what do you chose to do? Now I would like you to draw that for me."

When the child has completed the picture s/he is asked to place a gold sticker beside it. The tester explained that the gold sticker meant you really enjoyed doing the activity. The same procedure was repeated prompted by the request " Think of something that you do not enjoy doing but may sometimes have to do." This time the child had to place a black sticker next to the picture. The tester explained that a black sticker means we do not enjoy doing it at all. The tester continued, " I am now going to show you some pictures. They are about different things that children do. You have to imagine you are doing the same thing as the child in the picture and tell me how you feel about doing it. If you really enjoy doing it you put a gold sticker next to it just as you did before. If it is something you do not enjoy doing you put a black sticker next to it, as before. If it is something which you think is neither good nor bad, you do not mind doing it, you put a white sticker next to it". (At this point the tester introduced the white label which had not yet been seen by the child. The tester also introduced phrases such as 'I don't mind', 'It's OK' or 'It's all right' in order to clarify the meaning of the white sticker.)

---

in the "dislike" range while silver was adopted for feelings which expressed enjoyment but were not as strong as those described by a gold sticker. In the main study smiley faces replaced coloured stickers

- Presentation of drawings

The tester continued by presenting the four drawings next to which the child placed the chosen sticker.

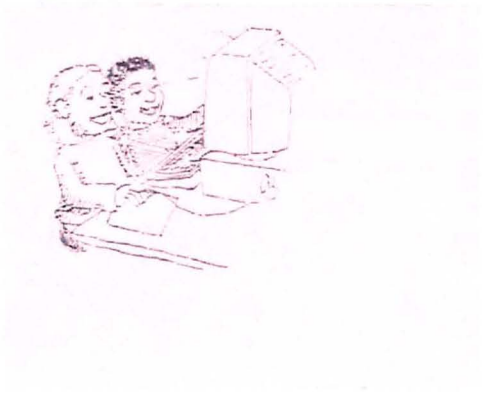
- Presentation of photographs

The tester continued: " I am now going to ask you to do the same with the next set of pictures. All these pictures have something to do with children, books and reading. Look at them carefully and imagine you were the child in the picture. Tell me how you would feel about it and then put the correct sticker next to it." At this stage the tester checked to see if the child had correctly understood and remembered the meaning of each sticker. The photographs were presented one by one.

- Scoring

The reading attitude score was calculated as a total score for all reading-related items. A low score (17-27) suggested a negative attitude towards reading. Conversely a high score (41-51) suggested a positive attitude towards reading. A middle score range 28-40 suggested an undefined or neutral attitude.

ITEM 1



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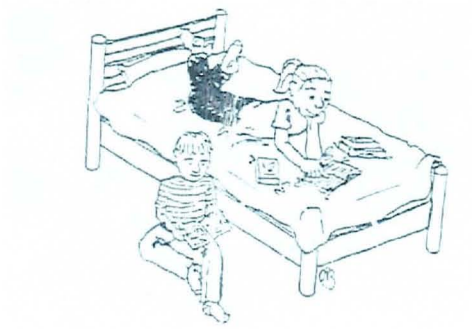


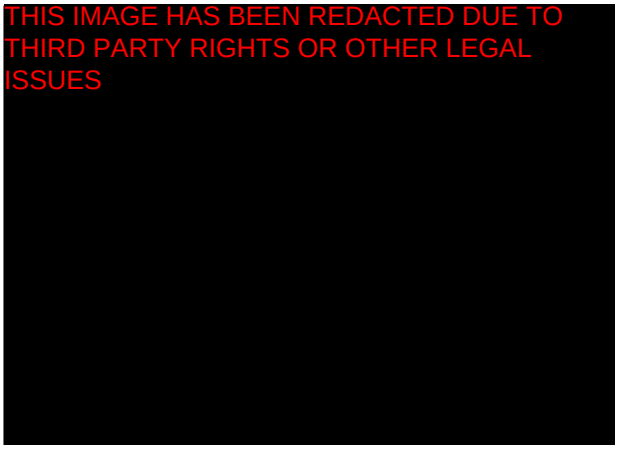
ITEM 3

ITEM 4

ITEM 5

ITEM 6

ITEM 7



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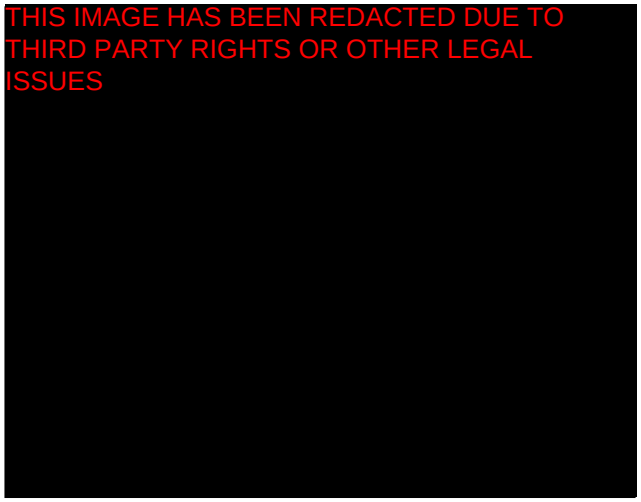

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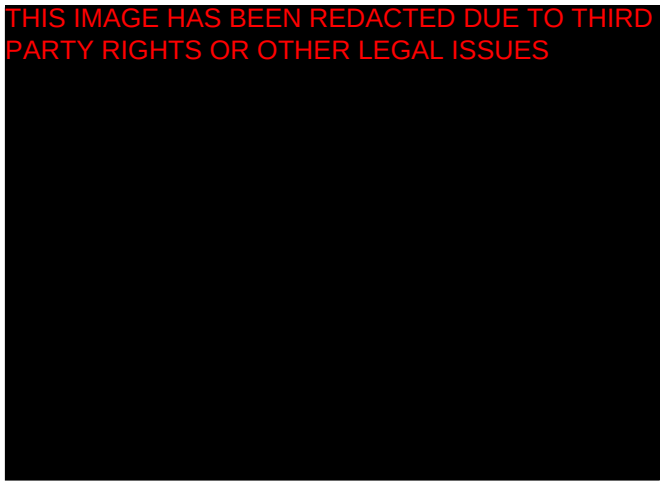
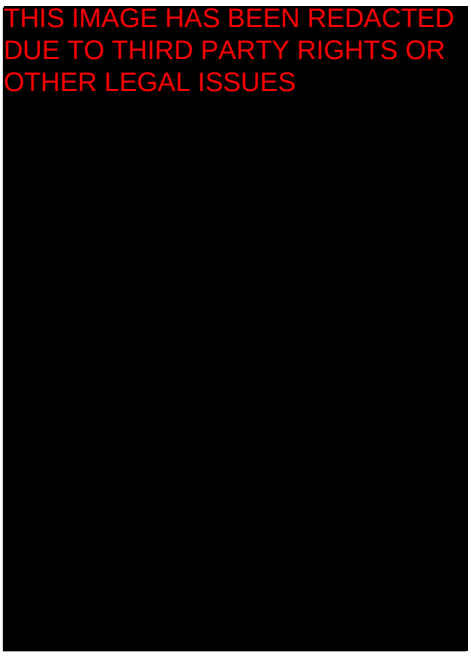


ITEM 10

ITEM 11

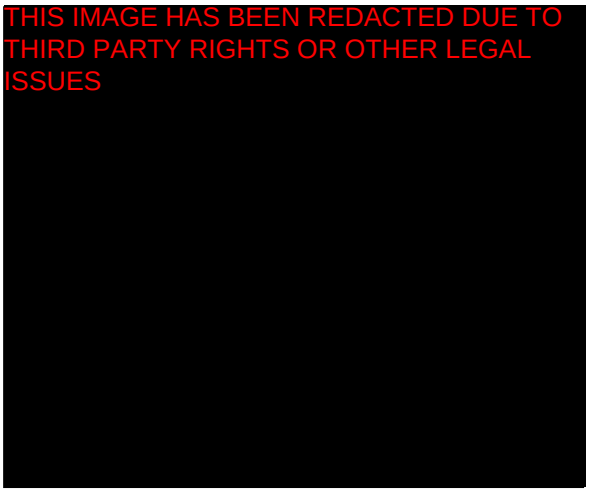
ITEM 12



ITEM 13

ITEM 14

ITEM 15



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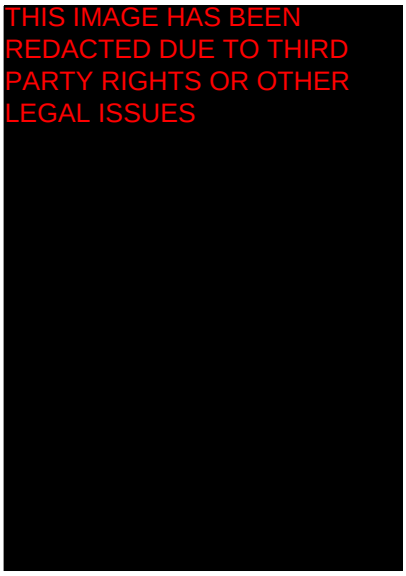

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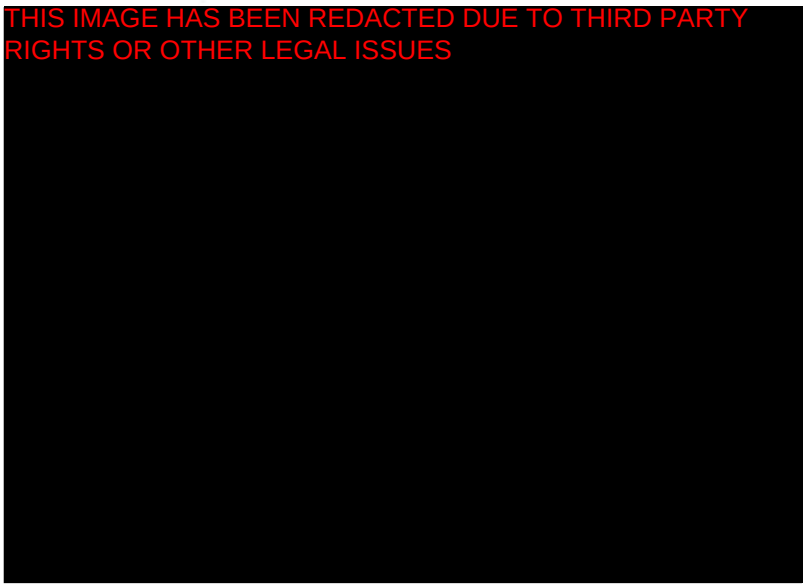
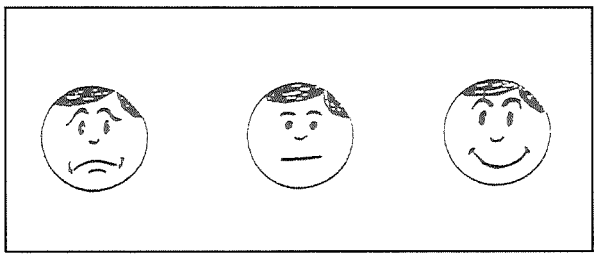


ITEM 18

ITEM 19

SMILEY FACES



Appendix 2

SECTION A

Dear Parents,

This questionnaire is part of a research study which is looking at children's ideas about literacy in their first years at school. The study aims to follow the development of these children from the ages of four to seven.

All information will be **strictly confidential** and used only for the purposes of this research.

If you are interested in participating in this study please return this questionnaire in the envelope provided.

With many thanks for your time and interest.

Yours sincerely,

Judy Lever-Chain

Thank you for taking the time to answer these questions.

For further information contact Judy Lever-Chain on 0181 866 3662 (ho) or 0181 866 9116 (wo)

You and your family

How many children do you have?

Boys ☐ Girls ☐

What is the date of birth of your child who enters Year 1 in September?

1) Day_____ Month _____ Year 19__

What is the main language you use in your home?

How old are you?
(tick the appropriate box)

15-19	20-30	31-40	over 40

At present are you ,

Single? yes no Married? yes no Widowed? yes no

Divorced or separated? yes no

Have you had any paid employment? yes no

If your answer was 'yes' was it,

part-time? yes no full time? yes no

Please describe the type of work you did

Do you have any paid employment at present? yes no

If your answer was 'yes' please describe the type of work you do

---

What was the name of your Primary School and where was it?

Name: Location:

What was the name of your secondary school and where was it?

Name:

Location

Did you continue with further education after secondary school? yes no

If the answer was yes what type of further education did you have?
(Tick the appropriate box)

School 6th form | college | other

List any qualifications you have gained

You and your home

yes no

Do you have a television?

If 'yes' how many televisions
(Write number in box)

Do you have a computer ? yes no

Do you have a video? yes no

How many children's books do you think you have in your home?
(Tick the appropriate box)

0-10	10-50	over 50

Do you belong to a local library ? yes no

Does your child belong to a local library? yes no

How often do you read a newspaper?
(Tick the appropriate box)

every day	2 or 3 times per week	once per week	less than once per week	never

Have you been away on holiday in the last year? yes no

If the answer was yes state where: _____

If you might like to participate in this research project together with your child I would be grateful if you could complete the rest of this form and return it to me together with the questionnaire in the stamped-addressed envelope.

We (your name and the name of your child) _____
would be happy to participate in the 2 year research project to be carried out by Judy Lever-Chain who is a student at The Institute of Education in London.

Signature _____ **Contact telephone no.** _____

Address

_____

Name of child's school _____

Section B

Dear «Title» «Last_Name»,

As you will remember we met last year and talked about your son, «Childname».
This summer I have continued my research project with two further visits to all the children involved in my study.

I would be very interested to hear from you about your child's school year and about how you feel your child is progressing. I enclose a questionnaire and I would be very grateful if you could find the time to complete it and return it to me in the s.a.e.

As with all information collected during the course of my work, I would like to assure you that the contents of these questionnaires remain completely anonymous and are used only for the purposes of this study.

Thank you for your continuing support in my work.

Yours sincerely,

Judy Lever-Chain

JULY 2000

YEAR ONE EXPERIENCE

1. How did your child settle into the Year One?
   (Tick the appropriate box)

a) Very easily
b) Quite well
c) With some difficulty
d) With great difficulty

If your child experienced some difficulties please describe them:

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

2. How long did your child take to settle into Year One?

a) Less than a week
b) A few weeks
c) Between half and one term
d) More than one term

3. Did your child find school work in Year One:

a) Very easy
b) Quite easy
c) Quite difficult
d) Very difficult

(Tick the appropriate box) PLEASE TURN OVER

4. During Year One did your child have to work:

a) Very hard
b) Quite hard
c) Not very hard
d) Not at all hard

(Tick the appropriate box)

5. Did your child find any aspects of school "a struggle" while he was in Year One?

Yes No
(Tick the appropriate box)

If so please describe:
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

LEARNING TO READ

6. How often does your child practise reading with you or another person at home?

a) Every day
b) 3 to 5 times per week
c) Once per week
d) Less than once per week

(Tick the appropriate box)

7. Does your child bring a book home from school

a) every day
b) two or three times per week
c) once a week
d) less than once a week

(Tick the appropriate box)

PLEASE TURN OVER

8. Have you any concerns about your child's reading?

Yes No

(Tick the appropriate box)

If you have any concerns please describe what these are:

.....
.....
.....
.....

9. Have you any concerns about your child's writing?

Yes No
(Tick the appropriate box)

If you have any concerns please describe what these are:

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

10. Do you feel you have helped your child with his reading:

a) A lot
b) Quite a lot
c) Not very much
d) Not at all

(Tick the appropriate box)

If you feel you have helped your child with his reading please describe how:

.....
.....
.....
.....11. Has your child enjoyed learning to read in Year One?

a) A lot
b) Quite a lot
c) Not very much
d) Not at all
(Tick the appropriate box) PLEASE TURN OVER

12. How did your child feel about learning to read in Year One?

a) It was very difficult
b) It was quite difficult
c) It was easy
d) It was very easy

(Tick the appropriate box)

13. Are you satisfied with your child's progress in learning to read?

Yes No
(Tick the appropriate box)

If not please explain:

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

14. Does your child seem to have any preferences in his choice of reading?

Yes No
(Tick the appropriate box)

If 'yes' please describe.....

.....
.....
.....
.....

SCHOOL AND HOME

15. How often do you talk to your child's teacher about his school work?

a) Every day
b) Once per week
c) Every few weeks
d) Less than once per term

16. Does your teacher give you guidance in how to help your child at home with his reading?

Yes No
(Tick the appropriate box)

If so describe the type of guidance that is given:

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

THANK YOU FOR ANSWERING THESE QUESTIONS

If you would like to add any more comments relating to these questions please feel free to do so below:

Section C

Dear «Title» «Last_Name» ,

Two years ago you kindly agreed to the involvement of «Childname» in my two year study of boys' literacy development. Sixty boys have participated and I would like to thank all of them for their work and you for allowing «Childname», to contribute.

I enclose a final questionnaire and I would be very grateful if you would complete this and return it to me in s.a.e.

The study should be completed by the autumn of 2001 at which time I look forward to sharing the findings with you.

Once again my warmest thanks for your support over the last two years.

Yours sincerely,

June 2001

NAME OF CHILD:

.....

YEAR TWO EXPERIENCE

1. Did your child find school work in Year Two:

e) Very easy
f) Quite easy
g) Quite difficult
h) Very difficult

(Tick the appropriate box)

2. During Year Two did your child have to work:

e) Very hard
f) Quite hard
g) Not very hard
h) Not at all hard

(Tick the appropriate box)

3. How much has your child enjoyed being in Year 2:

e) A lot
f) Quite a lot
g) Not very much
h) Not at all

(Tick the appropriate box)

4. Did your child find any aspects of school a struggle while he was in Year 2?

Yes No
(Tick the appropriate box)

If so please describe:

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

READING ACTIVITIES

5. How often does your child read to you or another person at home

e) Every day

f) 3 to 5 times per week

g) Once per week

h) Less than once per week

(Tick the appropriate box)

6. How often do you read **to** your child?

a) Every day

b) 3 to 5 times per week

c) Once per week

d) Less than once per week

(Tick the appropriate box)

7. The books that your child reads are mostly:

a) His own

b) From school

c) From the local library

8. How often does your child choose to read to himself?

a) Every day

b) 3 to 5 times per week

c) Once per week

d) Less than once per week

9. Does your child seem to have any preferences in his choice of reading?

Yes No

(Tick the appropriate box)

If 'yes' please describe.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

READING DEVELOPMENT IN YEAR TWO

10. Do you feel you are helping your child with his reading?

a) A lot
b) Quite a lot
c) Not very much
d) Not at all

(Tick the appropriate box)

If you feel you do help your child with his reading please describe how:
.....
.....
.....
.....

11. Do you feel your own role is now less important than in previous years?

yes no not sure

Please explain your answer:
.....
.....
.....
.....

12. Does your child enjoy reading?

a) A lot
b) Quite a lot
c) Not very much
d) Not at all

(Tick the appropriate box)

13. How do you rate your child's standard of reading?

a) Poor
b) Not very good
c) Satisfactory
d) Good
e) Excellent

14. Are you satisfied with your child's progress in reading?

yes no not sure

(Tick the appropriate box)

If not explain why:

.....
.....
.....
.....

15. How does your child now feel about reading?

e) It is very difficult
f) It is quite difficult
g) It is easy
h) It is very easy

(Tick the appropriate box)

Please describe your child's attitude to reading

.....
.....
.....
.....

SCHOOL AND READING DEVELOPMENT

16. How would you rate your school's teaching of reading?

a) Poor

b) Not very good

c) Satisfactory

d) Good

e) Excellent

(Tick the appropriate box)

17. Which school year was most important in terms of your child's reading development?

a) The year leading up to Year One

b) Year One

c) Year Two

(Tick the appropriate box)

Please explain your choice

.....

.....

.....

.....

18. How important is it to teach children to read before **Year One**?

a) very important

b) important

c) not very important

d) not important at all

(Tick the appropriate box)

Do you believe that Key Stage One curriculum has placed too much emphasis on learning to read as compared to other areas of the curriculum?

Yes no not sure

(Tick the appropriate box)

19. Do you feel your child commenced full-time school?

a) Too early

b) Too late

c) At the correct age

(Tick the appropriate box)

If your answer was a or b please explain

.....

.....

.....

.....

THANK YOU FOR ANSWERING THESE QUESTIONS

If you would like to add any more comments relating to these questions please feel free to do so below:

Section D

Please place a **tick** by the titles you **recognize** and a **cross** by the ones you do **not** recognize:

Alfie's Alphabet _____
Arthur's Chicken Pox _____
Big Old Trucks _____
Billy's Beetle _____
Burglar Bill _____
Can't You Sleep Little Bear _____
Cat in the Hat _____
Clarissa's Patch _____
Dear Zoo _____
Dinosaur Dreams _____
Dinosaurs & All That Rubbish _____
Dogger _____
Each Peach Pear Plum _____
Eleanor and the Magic Bag _____
Elmer _____
Floss _____
Frightened Fred _____
Funnybones _____
Hello Morning, Hello Day _____
How Stephen Found a Pet _____
How Wishes Come True _____
I Hear a Knock at My Window _____
Jamaica and Brianna _____
Jasper's Beanstalk _____
Jim and Beanstalk _____
Jolly Witch _____
Kimberley's Horse _____
Kipper _____
Lighthouse Keeper's Lunch _____
Little Bear's Trousers _____
Martha Rabbit's Family _____
Not Now Bernard _____
Nothing _____
Oi Get Off Our Train _____
Oscar Got the Blame _____
Owl Babies _____
Peace at Last _____
Penguin Small _____
Pig in the Pond _____
Rachel's Real Dilemma _____
Schnitzel Von Krumm's Bastketwork _____
Six Dinner Sid _____
Snow Lambs _____
Snowflakes are Falling _____
Terry Toad _____
The Paper Boat's Trip _____
The Toy Trunk _____
Three Cheers for Gloria _____
Tiger Who Came to Tea _____
Tiny Ted _____
Too Much Talk _____
Tracy Tickles _____
True Story of Three Little Pigs _____
Two Monsters _____
Very Hungry Caterpillar _____
We're Going on a Bear Hunt _____
Whale's Song _____
What Do I Hear Now? _____
Where's My Teddy? _____
Where's Spot _____
Where the Wild Things Are? _____
Winnie the Witch _____
Winter Fun on Snowy Days _____
Wish You Were Here _____
Worry No Longer _____
Zack's House _____

Highlighted titles are foils

Stipek Didactic Scale (Stipek et al., 1992)

There are 14 statements; read each one and **circle** the score which shows **how much** you **agree** with what has been said.

A score of **5** means you **definitely agree** with the statement.
A Score of **1** means you **definitely disagree** with the statement
Scores of **2, 3, or 4** indicate your **level of agreement** between these two points.

1. Parents should make sure that children in the Nursery practice reading and arithmetic at home 1 2 3 4 5
2. Children who begin learning how to read in Nursery will do better at school 1 2 3 4 5
3. The best way to learn how to read is to practice matching letters and sounds over and over 1 2 3 4 5
4. Even four and five year olds should be told whether their work is good or bad 1 2 3 4 5
5. Children learn best when they do learning activities chosen by teachers or parents 1 2 3 4 5
6. Homework should be given in Nursery almost every day 1 2 3 4 5
7. Primary school children should be punished when they do badly on their school work 1 2 3 4 5
8. If a child is not doing well in Nursery, time should be set aside every day at home to practice school work 1 2 3 4 5
9 Children's school work should not be graded in the early years of primary school 1 2 3 4 5
10. Parents should make sure their children know the alphabet before their children start in Year 1 1 2 3 4 5
11. Nursery children should not spend very much time working at a table 1 2 3 4 5
12. Most children should learn to read in Nursery 1 2 3 4 5
13. Nursery children should not be taught to read unless they show an interest 1 2 3 4 5
14. A Nursery child who is behind classmates academically should be kept back rather than go into Year 1 1 2 3 4 5

15. What if your child was beginning to learn to write his name and wrote his name with some of the letters backwards? Which of the following sentences describes what you should probably do?
Praise him and ignore the backwards letters
Praise him and point out the backwards letters
Point out some letters are backwards and not praise
Point out some letters are backwards and ask your child to correct the mistake

Stipek, D., Milburn, S., Clements, D., et al. (1992). Parents Beliefs about Appropriate Education for Young Children. Journal of Applied Developmental Psychology, 13, 293-310.

APPENDIX 3

Section A

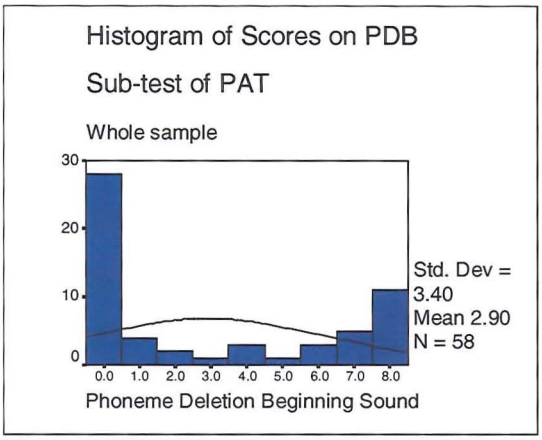


Figure A.3.1

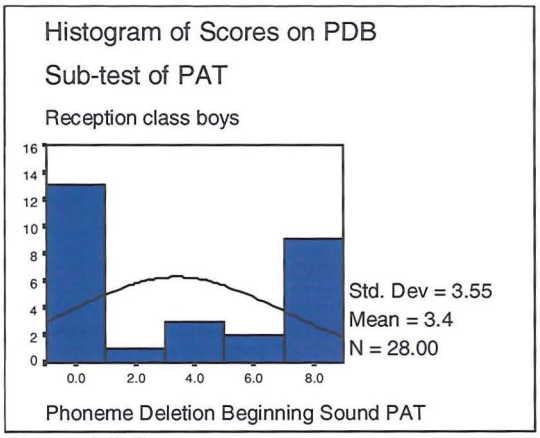


Figure A.3.2

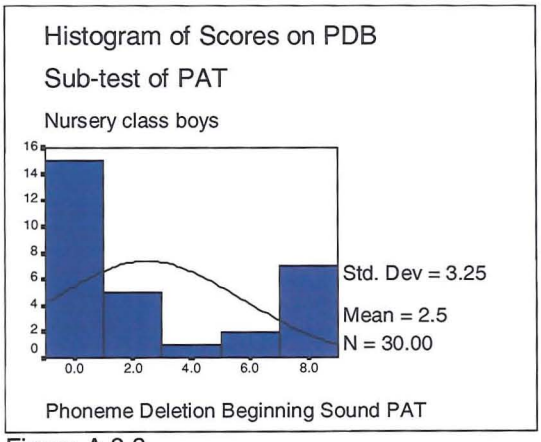


Figure A.3.3

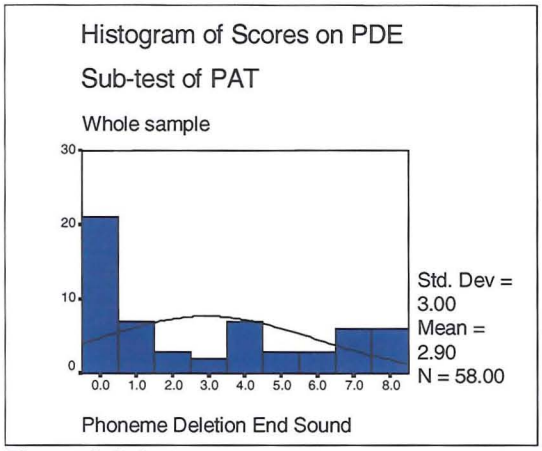
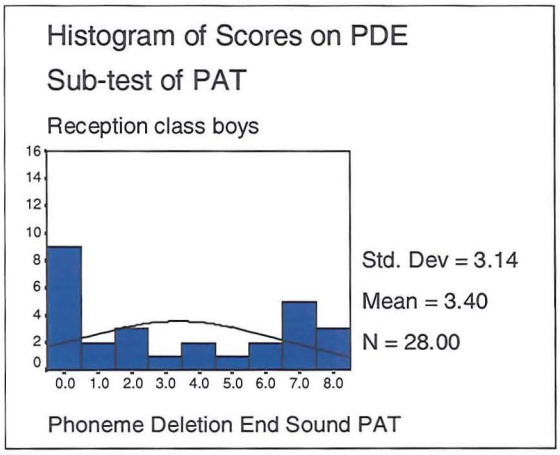


Figure A.3.4



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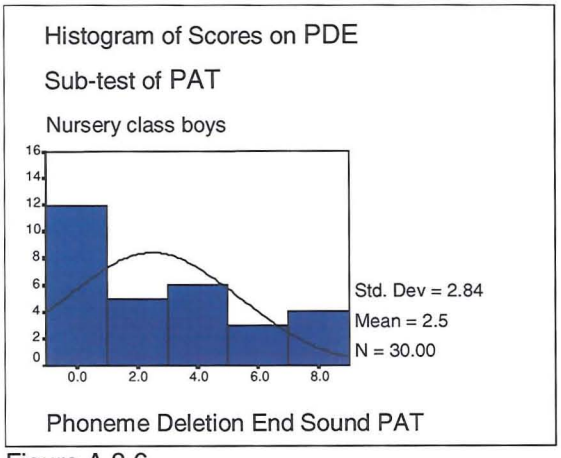

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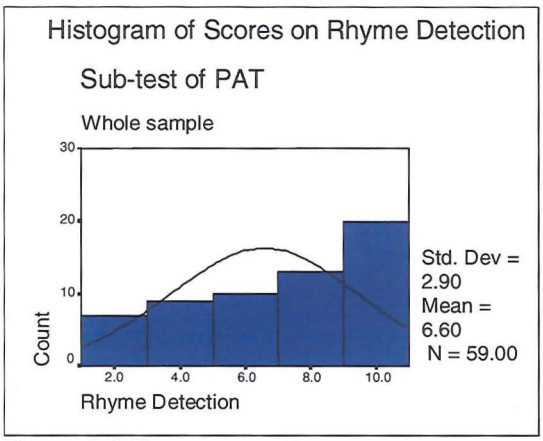

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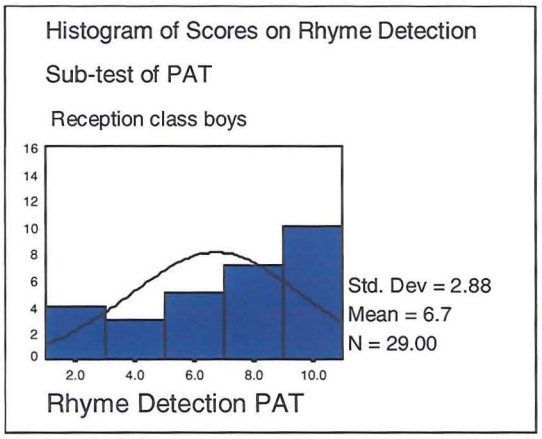

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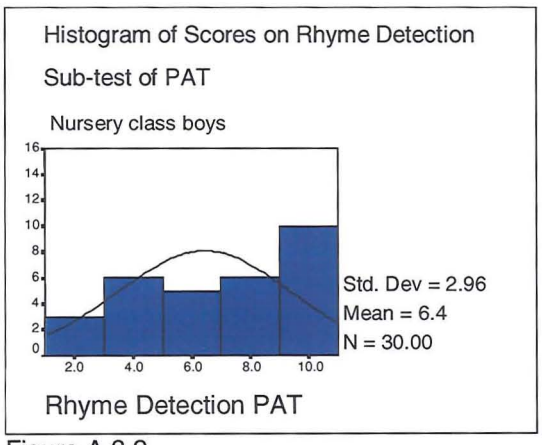

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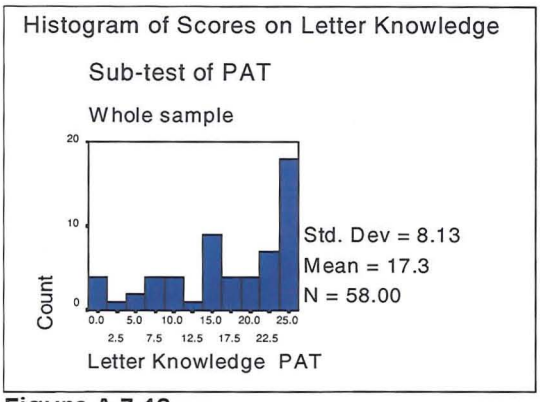

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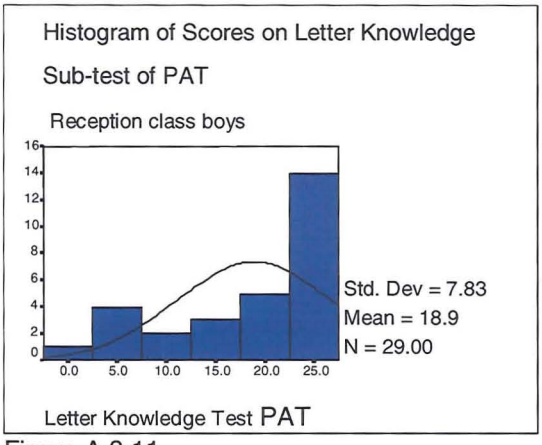

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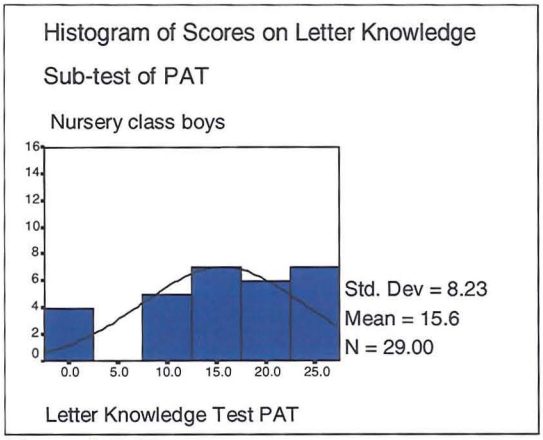

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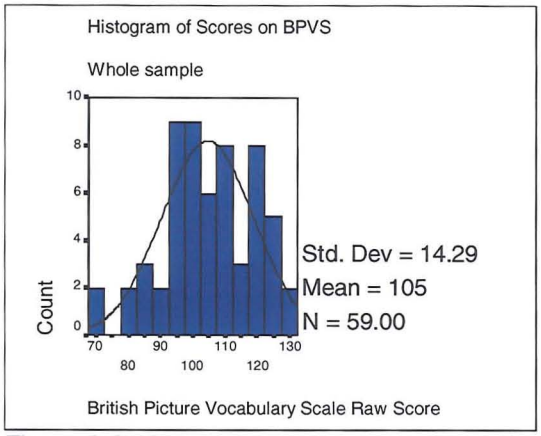

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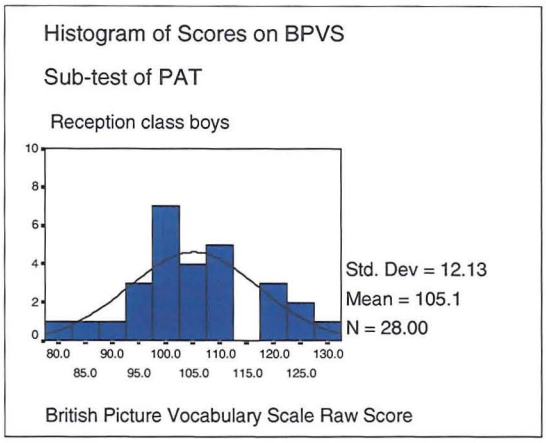

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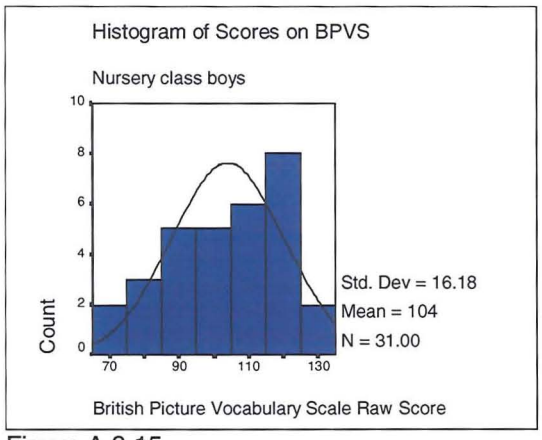


Figure A.3.15

Section B

Mother's Education classified as:

1: School qualifications or less (GSCE/CSE/O level)
2: Vocational qualification (eg. secretarial/NNEB)
3: A level
4: HND/Btec
5: Degree
6: Postgraduate

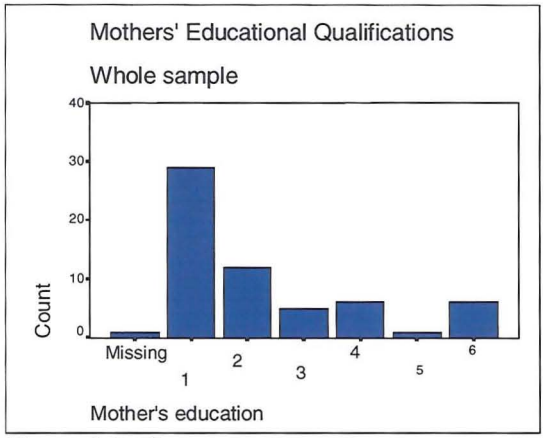
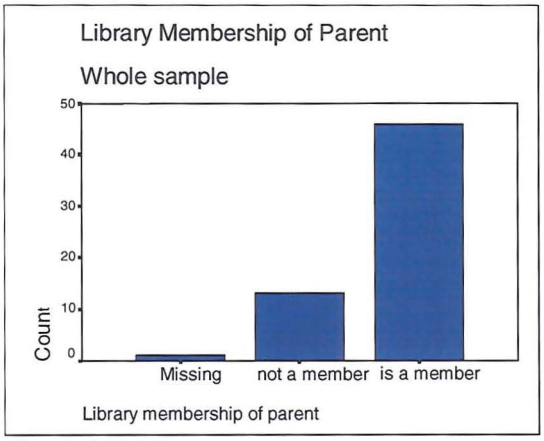


Figure A.3.16



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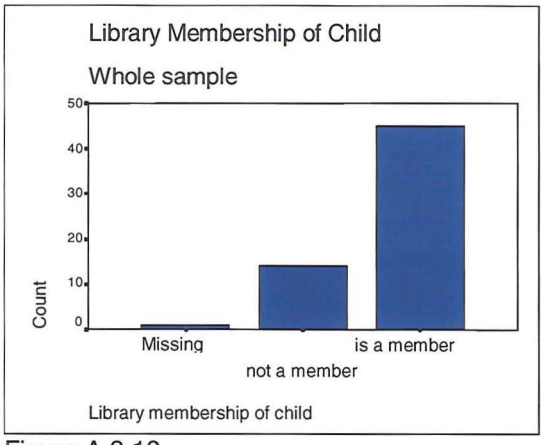

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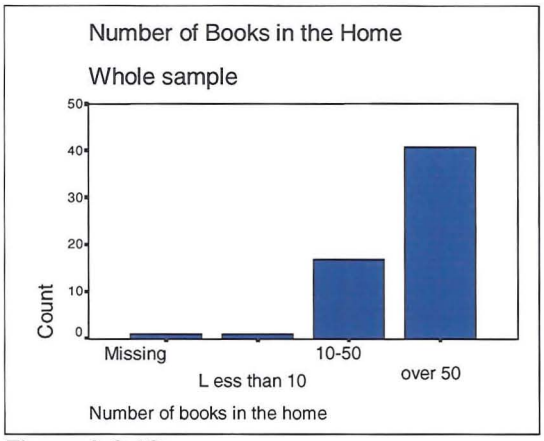

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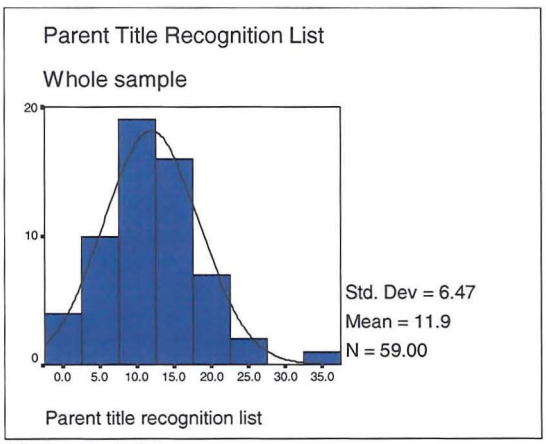

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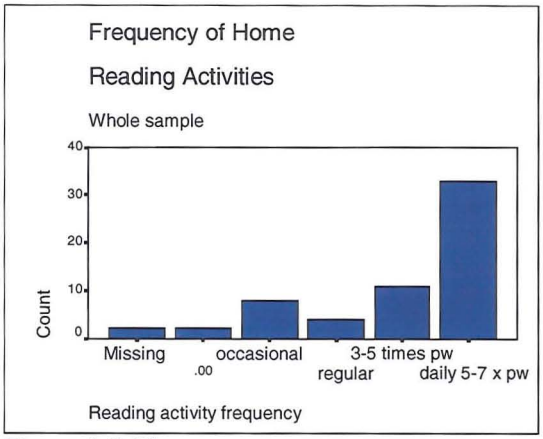

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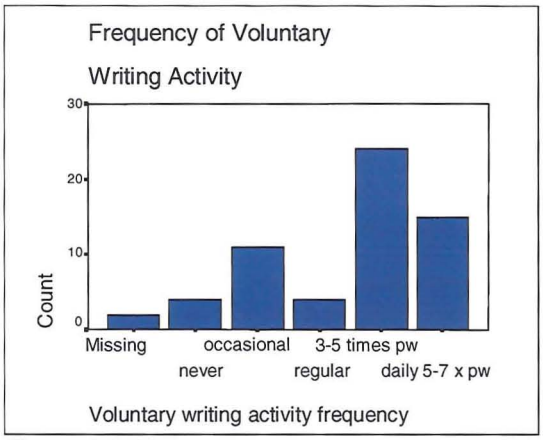

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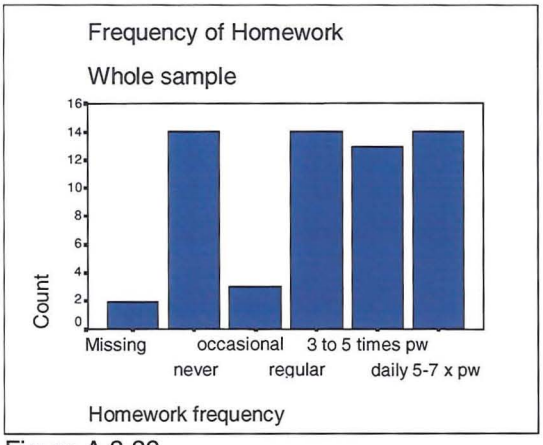

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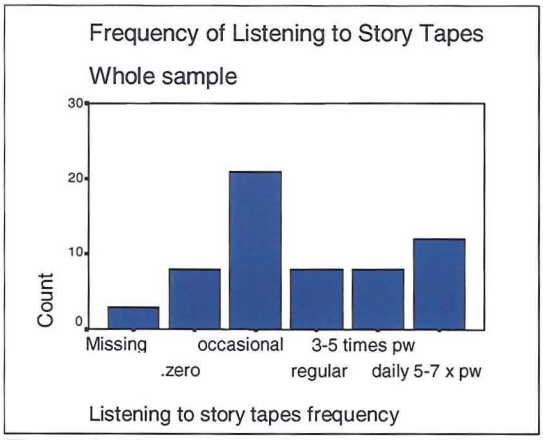

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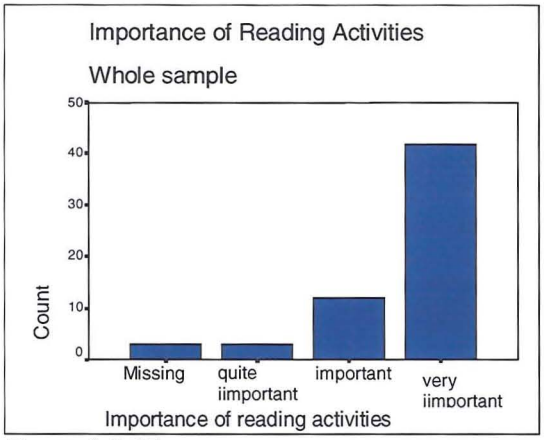

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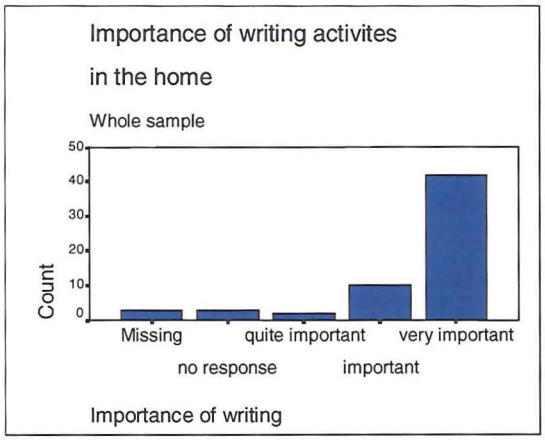

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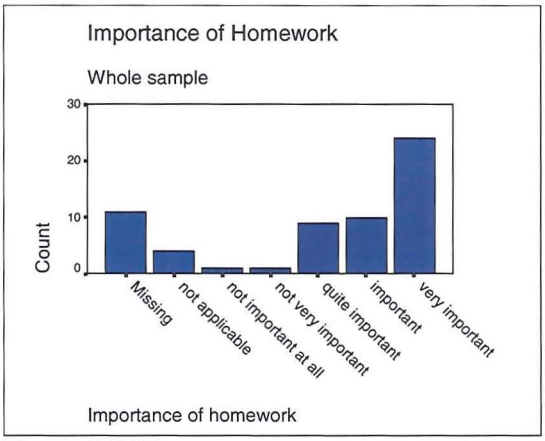
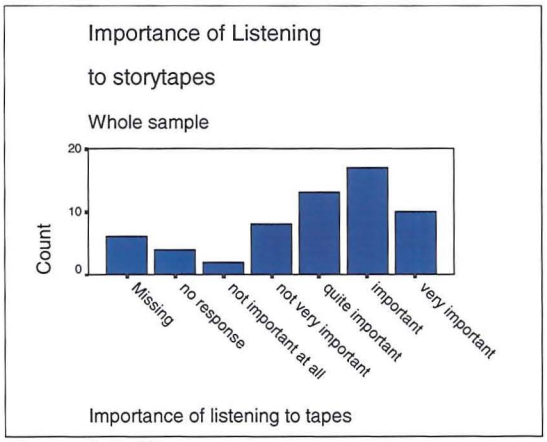


Figure A.3.27



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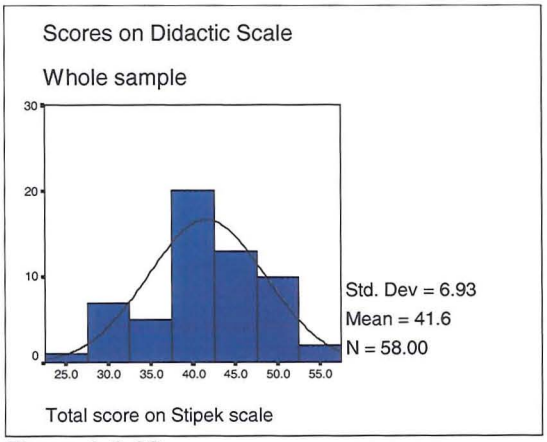


Figure A.3.29

Section C
Measures of home literacy

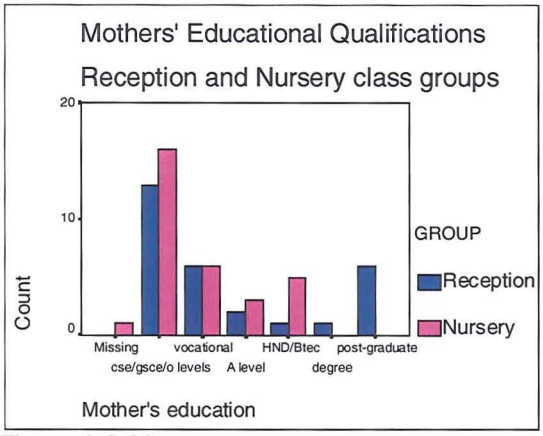


Figure A.3.29

Case Processing Summary

	Cases					
	Valid		Missing		Total	
	N	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent
Mother's education * GROUP	59	98.3%	1	1.7%	60	100.0%

Table A.3.1

Mother's education * GROUP Crosstabulation

Count

		GROUP		Total
		Reception	Nursery	
Mother's education	cse/gsce/o levels	13	16	29
	vocational	6	6	12
	A level	2	3	5
	HND/Btec	1	5	6
	degree	1		1
	post-graduate	6		6
Total		29	30	59

Table A.3.2

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	10.163[a]	5	.071
Likelihood Ratio	13.110	5	.022
Linear-by-Linear Association	2.791	1	.095
N of Valid Cases	59		

a. 8 cells (66.7%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .49.

Table A.3.3

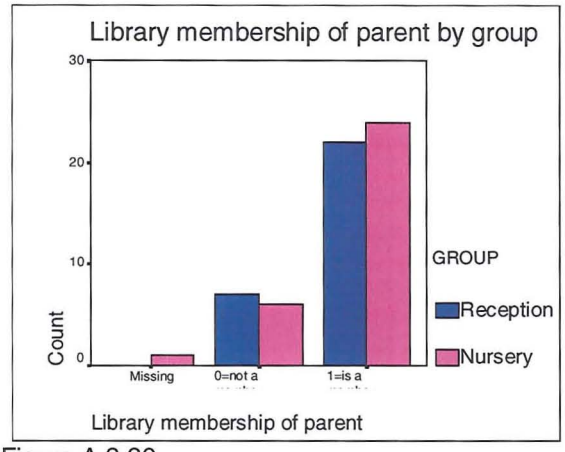


Figure A.3.30

Case Processing Summary

	Cases					
	Valid		Missing		Total	
	N	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent
Library membership of parent * GROUP	59	98.3%	1	1.7%	60	100.0%

Table A.3.4

Library membership of parent * GROUP Crosstabulation

Count

		GROUP		
		Reception	Nursery	Total
Library membership of parent	0=not a member	7	6	13
	1=is a member	22	24	46
Total		29	30	59

Table A.3.5

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (1-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	.147[b]	1	.701		
Continuity Correction[a]	.005	1	.945		
Likelihood Ratio	.147	1	.701		
Fisher's Exact Test				.761	.472
Linear-by-Linear Association	.144	1	.704		
N of Valid Cases	59				

a. Computed only for a 2x2 table

b. 0 cells (.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 6.39.

Table A.3.6

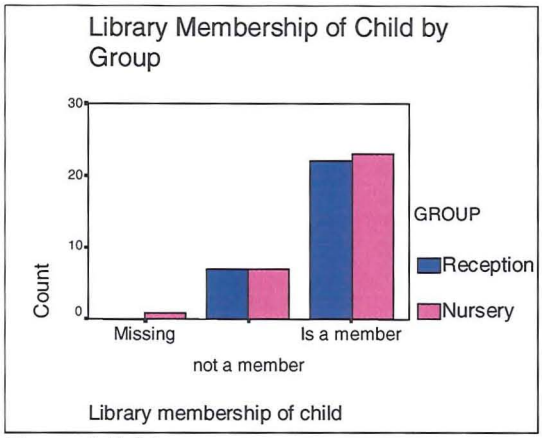


Figure A.3.31

Case Processing Summary

	Cases					
	Valid		Missing		Total	
	N	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent
Library membership of child * GROUP	59	98.3%	1	1.7%	60	100.0%

Table A.3.7

Library membership of child * GROUP Crosstabulation

Count

		GROUP		
		Reception	Nursery	Total
Library membership of child	child not a member	7	7	14
	child is a member	22	23	45
Total		29	30	59

Table A.3.8

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (1-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	.005[b]	1	.942		
Continuity Correction[a]	.000	1	1.000		
Likelihood Ratio	.005	1	.942		
Fisher's Exact Test				1.000	.592
Linear-by-Linear Association	.005	1	.943		
N of Valid Cases	59				

a. Computed only for a 2x2 table

b. 0 cells (.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 6.88.

Table A.3.9

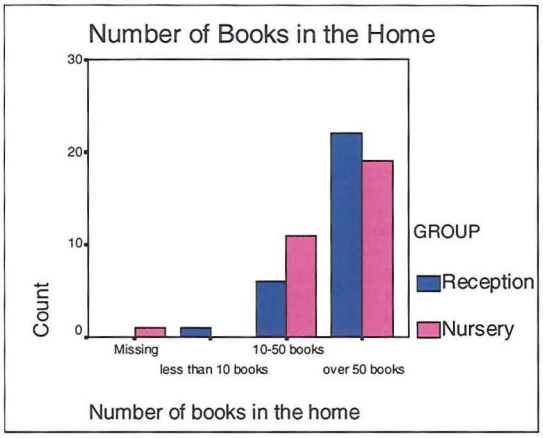


Figure A.3.32

Case Processing Summary

	Cases					
	Valid		Missing		Total	
	N	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent
Number of books in the home * GROUP	59	98.3%	1	1.7%	60	100.0%

Table A.3.10

Number of books in the home * GROUP Crosstabulation

Count

		GROUP		
		Reception	Nursery	Total
Number of books in the home	less than 10 books	1		1
	10-50 books	6	11	17
	over 50 books	22	19	41
Total		29	30	59

Table A.3.11

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	2.674[a]	2	.263
Likelihood Ratio	3.082	2	.214
Linear-by-Linear Association	.474	1	.491
N of Valid Cases	59		

a. 2 cells (33.3%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .49.

Table A.3.12

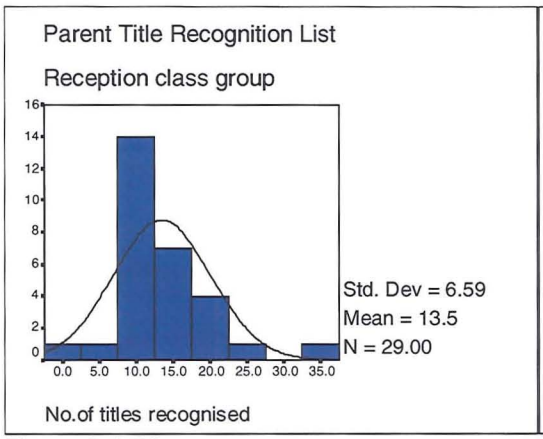


Figure A.3.33

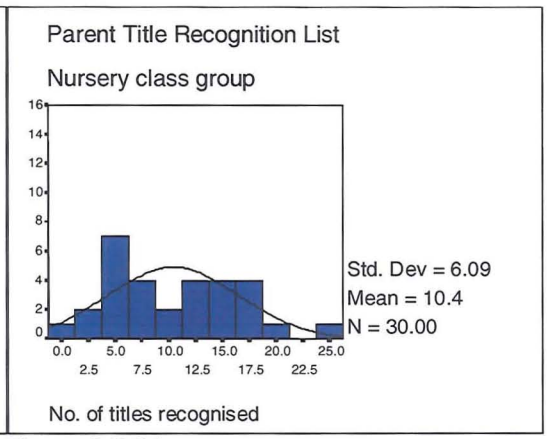


Figure A.3.34

Group Statistics

	GROUP	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Parent title recognition list	Reception	29	13.48	6.59	1.22
	Nursery	30	10.43	6.09	1.11

Table A.3.13.

Independent Samples Test

		t-test for Equality of Means				
		t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference
Parent title recognition list	Equal variances assumed	1.85	57	.07	3.05	1.65
	Equal variances not assumed	1.84	56.27	.07	3.05	1.65

Table A.3.14

Literacy activity in the home

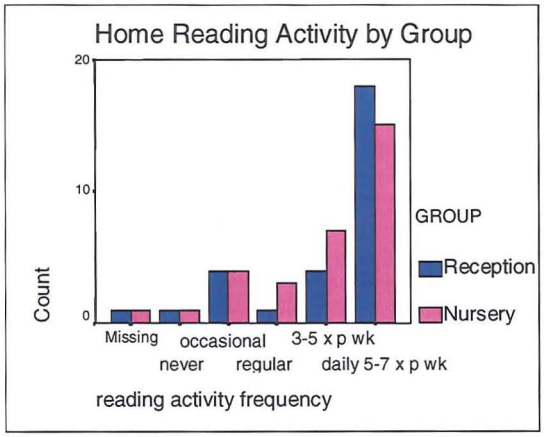


Figure A.3.35

Case Processing Summary

	Cases					
	Valid		Missing		Total	
	N	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent
Questionnaire reading activity frequency * GROUP	58	96.7%	2	3.3%	60	100.0%

Table A. 3.15

Questionnaire reading activity frequency * GROUP Crosstabulation

Count

		GROUP		
		Reception	Nursery	Total
Questionnaire reading activity frequency	never	1	1	2
	occasional	4	4	8
	regular	1	3	4
	3-5 times per week	4	7	11
	daily (5-7 times per week)	18	15	33
Total		28	30	58

Table A. 3.16

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	2.024[a]	4	.731
Likelihood Ratio	2.079	4	.721
Linear-by-Linear Association	.314	1	.575
N of Valid Cases	58		

a. 6 cells (60.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .97.

Table A.3.17

(no significant differences found when table collapsed from five frequency categories to three frequency categories)

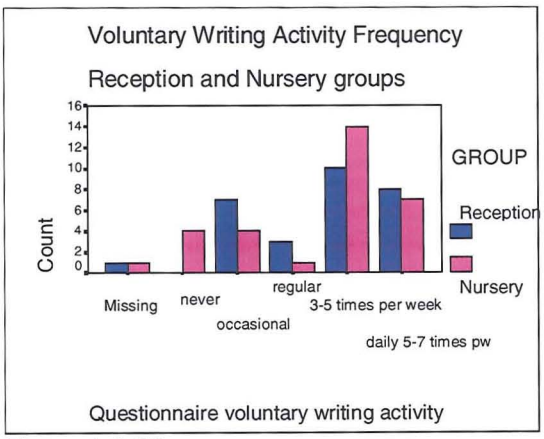


Figure A.3.36

Case Processing Summary

	Cases					
	Valid		Missing		Total	
	N	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent
Questionnaire voluntary writing activity * GROUP	58	96.7%	2	3.3%	60	100.0%

Table A.3.18

Questionnaire voluntary writing activity * GROUP Crosstabulation

Count

		GROUP		
		Reception	Nursery	Total
Questionnaire voluntary writing activity	never		4	4
	occasional	7	4	11
	regular	3	1	4
	3-5 times per week	10	14	24
	daily 5-7 times pw	8	7	15
Total		28	30	58

Table A.3.19

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	6.490[a]	4	.165
Likelihood Ratio	8.088	4	.088
Linear-by-Linear Association	.194	1	.660
N of Valid Cases	58		

a. 4 cells (40.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 1.93.

Table A.3.20

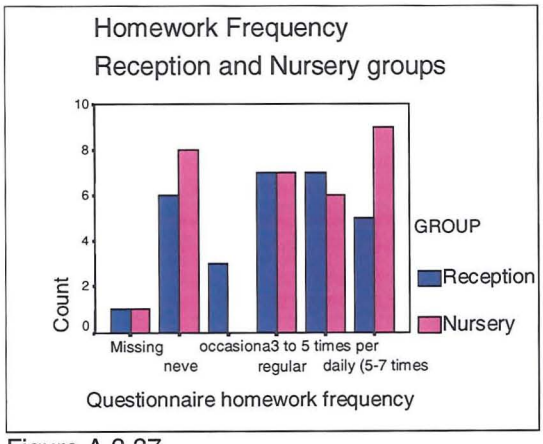


Figure A.3.37

Case Processing Summary

	Cases					
	Valid		Missing		Total	
	N	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent
Questionnaire homework frequency * GROUP	58	96.7%	2	3.3%	60	100.0%

Table A.3.21

Questionnaire homework frequency * GROUP Crosstabulation

Count

		GROUP		
		Reception	Nursery	Total
Questionnaire homework frequency	never	6	8	14
	occasional	3		3
	regular	7	7	14
	3 to 5 times per week	7	6	13
	daily (5-7 times per week)	5	9	14
Total		28	30	58

Table A.3.22

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	4.442[a]	4	.350
Likelihood Ratio	5.613	4	.230
Linear-by-Linear Association	.249	1	.618
N of Valid Cases	58		

a. 2 cells (20.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 1.45.

Table A.3.23

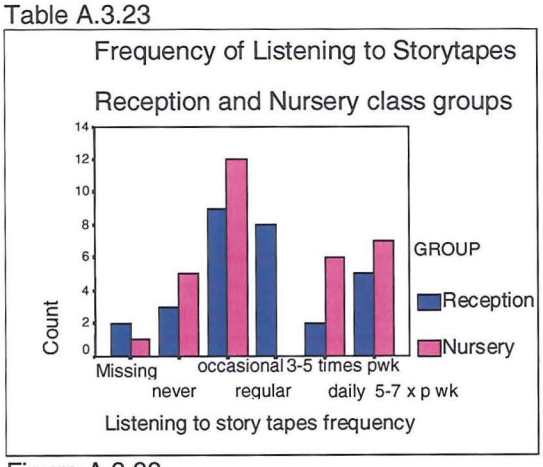


Figure A.3.38

Case Processing Summary

	Cases					
	Valid		Missing		Total	
	N	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent
Listening to Story Tapes Frequency * GROUP	57	95.0%	3	5.0%	60	100.0%

Table A.3.24

Listening to Story Tapes Frequency * GROUP Crosstabulation

Count

		GROUP		
		Reception	Nursery	Total
Listening to Story Tapes Frequency	occasional/never	12	17	29
	3-5 times per week	10	6	16
	daily/almost daily	5	7	12
Total		27	30	57

Table A.3.25

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	2.043[a]	2	.360
Likelihood Ratio	2.054	2	.358
Linear-by-Linear Association	.337	1	.561
N of Valid Cases	57		

a. 0 cells (.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 5.68.

Table A.3.26

(table collapsed from original five frequency categories to three categories)

Parental beliefs

0 not applicable
1 not important at all
2 not very important
3 quite important
4 important
5 very important

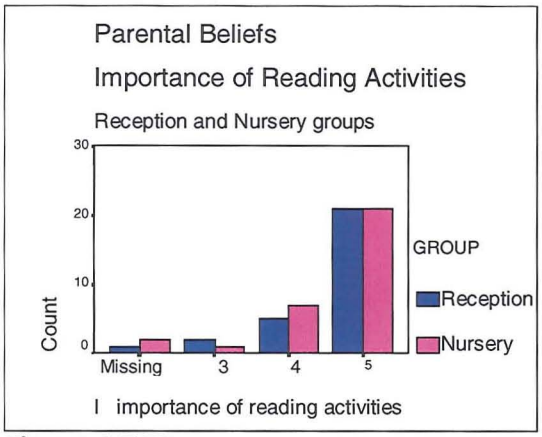


Figure A.3.39

Case Processing Summary

	Cases					
	Valid		Missing		Total	
	N	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent
questionnaire importance of reading activities * GROUP	57	95.0%	3	5.0%	60	100.0%

Table A.3.27

questionnaire importance of reading activities * GROUP Crosstabulation

Count

		GROUP		
		Reception	Nursery	Total
questionnaire importance of reading activities	quite important	2	1	3
	important	5	7	12
	very important	21	21	42
Total		28	29	57

Table A.3.28

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	.649[a]	2	.723
Likelihood Ratio	.657	2	.720
Linear-by-Linear Association	.005	1	.942
N of Valid Cases	57		

a. 2 cells (33.3%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 1.47.

Table A.3.29

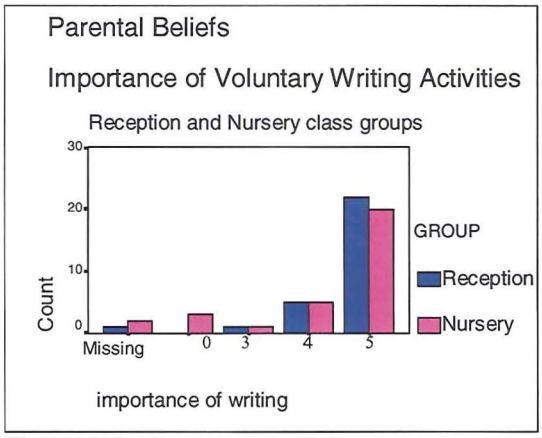


Figure A.3.40

Case Processing Summary

	Cases					
	Valid		Missing		Total	
	N	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent
questionnaire importance of writing * GROUP	57	95.0%	3	5.0%	60	100.0%

Table A.3.30

questionnaire importance of writing * GROUP Crosstabulation

Count

		GROUP		Total
		Reception	Nursery	
questionnaire importance of writing	not applicable		3	3
	quite important	1	1	2
	important	5	5	10
	very important	22	20	42
Total		28	29	57

Table A.3.31

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	3.079[a]	3	.380
Likelihood Ratio	4.237	3	.237
Linear-by-Linear Association	2.638	1	.104
N of Valid Cases	57		

a. 5 cells (62.5%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .98.

Table A.3.32

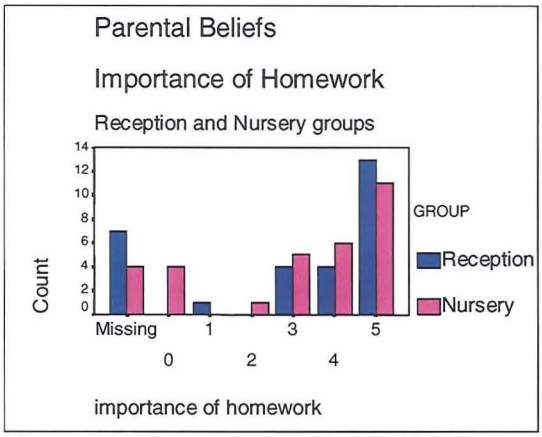


Figure A.3.41

Case Processing Summary

	Cases					
	Valid		Missing		Total	
	N	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent
questionnaire importance of homework * GROUP	49	81.7%	11	18.3%	60	100.0%

Table A.3.33

questionnaire importance of homework * GROUP Crosstabulation

Count

		GROUP		Total
		Reception	Nursery	
questionnaire importance of homework	not applicable		4	4
	not important at all	1		1
	not very important		1	1
	quite important	4	5	9
	important	4	6	10
	very important	13	11	24
Total		22	27	49

Table A.3.34

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	6.232[a]	5	.284
Likelihood Ratio	8.488	5	.131
Linear-by-Linear Association	2.739	1	.098
N of Valid Cases	49		

a. 9 cells (75.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .45.

Table A.3.35

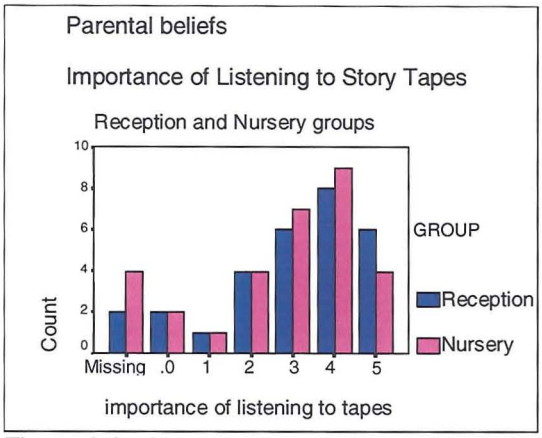


Figure A.3.42

Case Processing Summary

	Cases					
	Valid		Missing		Total	
	N	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent
questionnaire importance of listening to tapes * GROUP	54	90.0%	6	10.0%	60	100.0%

Table A.3.36

questionnaire importance of listening to tapes * GROUP Crosstabulation

Count

		GROUP		
		Reception	Nursery	Total
questionnaire importance of listening to tapes	.00	2	2	4
	not important at all	1	1	2
	not very important	4	4	8
	quite important	6	7	13
	important	8	9	17
	very important	6	4	10
Total		27	27	54

Table A.3.37

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	.536[a]	5	.991
Likelihood Ratio	.539	5	.991
Linear-by-Linear Association	.083	1	.773
N of Valid Cases	54		

a. 6 cells (50.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 1.00.

Table A.3.38

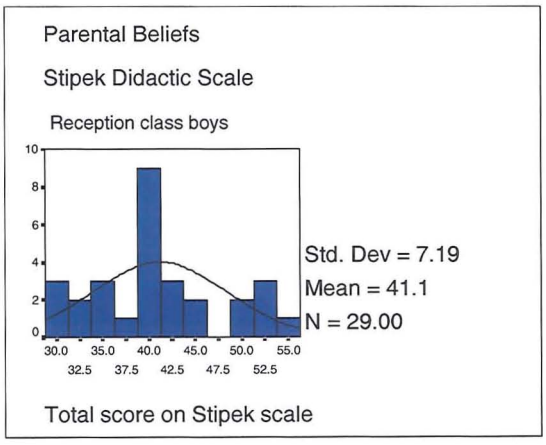


Figure A.3.43

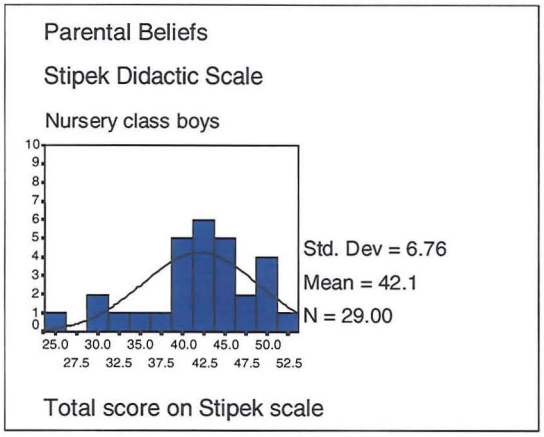


Figure A.3.44

Group Statistics

	GROUP	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Total score on Stipek scale	Reception	29	41.14	7.19	1.34
	Nursery	29	42.10	6.76	1.25

Table A.3.39

Independent Samples Test

		t-test for Equality of Means				
		t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference
Total score on Stipek scale	Equal variances assumed	-.53	56	.60	-.97	1.83
	Equal variances not assumed	-.53	55.79	.60	-.97	1.83

Table A.3.40

Section D

Regression

Variables Entered/Removed[b]

Model	Variables Entered	Variables Removed	Method
1	Mother's education, PRAI Total Score, Parent title recognition list, PRAS Total Score[a]	.	Enter
2	GROUP[a]	.	Enter

a. All requested variables entered.

b. Dependent Variable: Z Score for Literacy at Time One

Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.502[a]	.252	.195	.6494
2	.518[b]	.269	.197	.6486

a. Predictors: (Constant), Mother's education, PRAI Total Score, Parent title recognition list, PRAS Total Score

b. Predictors: (Constant), Mother's education, PRAI Total Score, Parent title recognition list, PRAS Total Score, GROUP

ANOVA[c]

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	7.404	4	1.851	4.389	.004[a]
	Residual	21.930	52	.422		
	Total	29.335	56			
2	Regression	7.879	5	1.576	3.746	.006[b]
	Residual	21.456	51	.421		
	Total	29.335	56			

a. Predictors: (Constant), Mother's education, PRAI Total Score, Parent title recognition list, PRAS Total Score

b. Predictors: (Constant), Mother's education, PRAI Total Score, Parent title recognition list, PRAS Total Score, GROUP

c. Dependent Variable: Z Score for Literacy at Time One

Coefficients[a]

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	-1.112	.646		-1.723	.091
	PRAI Total Score	6.133E-02	.019	.483	3.207	.002
	PRAS Total Score	-5.42E-02	.023	-.361	-2.407	.020
	Parent title recognition list	3.191E-02	.014	.283	2.236	.030
	Mother's education	4.990E-02	.056	.116	.889	.378
2	(Constant)	-.869	.685		-1.269	.210
	PRAI Total Score	6.158E-02	.019	.485	3.224	.002
	PRAS Total Score	-5.12E-02	.023	-.341	-2.259	.028
	Parent title recognition list	2.975E-02	.014	.264	2.066	.044
	Mother's education	3.799E-02	.057	.088	.665	.509
	GROUP	-.192	.180	-.133	-1.062	.293

a. Dependent Variable: Z Score for Literacy at Time One

Excluded Variables[b]

Model		Beta In	t	Sig.	Partial Correlation	Collinearity Statistics
						Tolerance
1	GROUP	-.133[a]	-1.062	.293	-.147	.908

a. Predictors in the Model: (Constant), Mother's education, PRAI Total Score, Parent title recognition list, PRAS Total Score

b. Dependent Variable: Z Score for Literacy at Time One

Regression

Variables Entered/Removed[b]

Model	Variables Entered	Variables Removed	Method
1	Z Score for Literacy at Time One, Mother's education, Parent title recognition list[a]	.	Enter
2	GROUP[a]	.	Enter

a. All requested variables entered.

b. Dependent Variable: PRAS Total Score

Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.271[a]	.074	.022	4.7676
2	.298[b]	.089	.020	4.7728

a. Predictors: (Constant), Z Score for Literacy at Time One, Mother's education, Parent title recognition list

b. Predictors: (Constant), Z Score for Literacy at Time One, Mother's education, Parent title recognition list, GROUP

ANOVA[c]

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	97.379	3	32.460	1.428	.245[a]
	Residual	1227.397	54	22.730		
	Total	1324.776	57			
2	Regression	117.469	4	29.367	1.289	.286[b]
	Residual	1207.306	53	22.779		
	Total	1324.776	57			

a. Predictors: (Constant), Z Score for Literacy at Time One, Mother's education, Parent title recognition list

b. Predictors: (Constant), Z Score for Literacy at Time One, Mother's education, Parent title recognition list, GROUP

c. Dependent Variable: PRAS Total Score

Coefficients[a]

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	27.603	1.522		18.141	.000
	Parent title recognition list	-6.29E-02	.106	-.083	-.594	.555
	Mother's education	.805	.399	.278	2.015	.049
	Z Score for Literacy at Time One	-.634	.926	-.094	-.685	.496
2	(Constant)	25.468	2.736		9.308	.000
	Parent title recognition list	-4.93E-02	.107	-.065	-.461	.646
	Mother's education	.857	.404	.296	2.124	.038
	Z Score for Literacy at Time One	-.512	.936	-.076	-.546	.587
	GROUP	1.234	1.314	.129	.939	.352

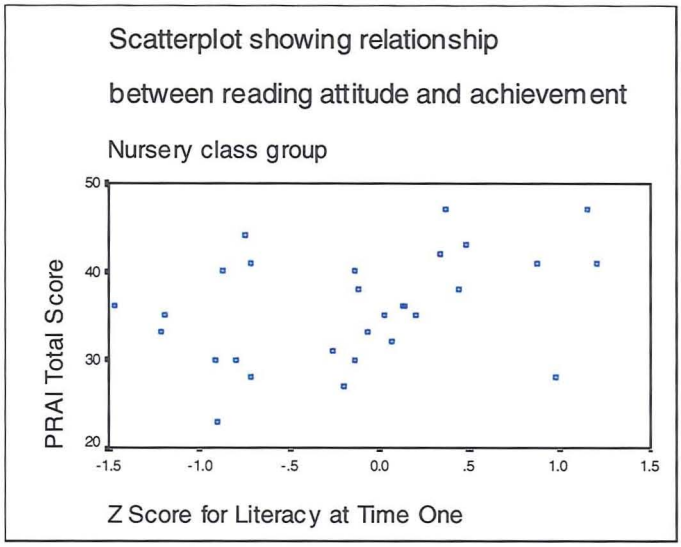
a. Dependent Variable: PRAS Total Score

Excluded Variables[b]

Model		Beta In	t	Sig.	Partial Correlation	Collinearity Statistics
						Tolerance
1	GROUP	.129[a]	.939	.352	.128	.910

a. Predictors in the Model: (Constant), Z Score for Literacy at Time One, Mother's education, Parent title recognition list

b. Dependent Variable: PRAS Total Score



Section E

Figure 7.8 Scatterplot showing relationship between reading attitude (PRAI scores) and reading achievement (z score literacy) for Reception class boys

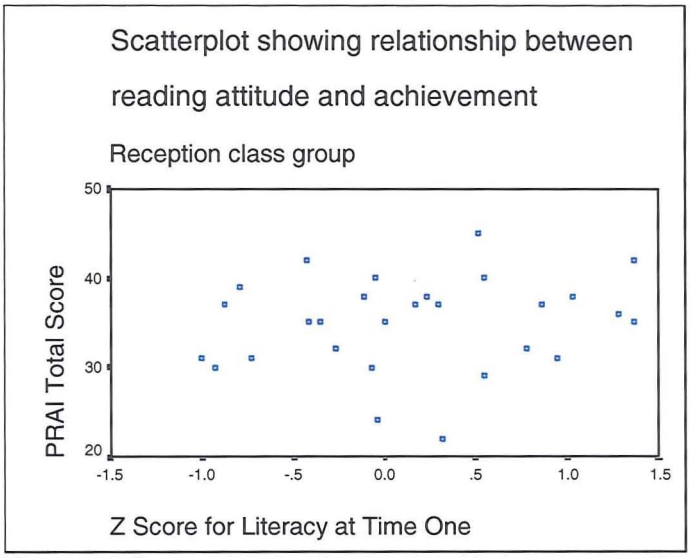


Figure 7.9 Scatterplot showing relationship between reading attitude (PRAI scores) and reading achievement (z score literacy) for Nursery class boys

APPENDIX 4

Section A
Qualitative analysis of the affective component of reading as described by boys at age five

Children referred to individually in the text are highlighted in purple

STANDARDIZED SCORE	RECEPTION BOY	NURSERY BOY
Low range: negative attitude		
- 5.47	Alex	
-4.27	Joel	
-3.82		Dennis
-2.69		Rob
-2.64	Harry	
-2.51		Darren
-2.30		Dan
-1.94	Hideo	
Middle range: 'typical'		
-1.77		Jack
-1.38	Henry	
-1.30		Damion
-1.06		Saul
-.68	Frank	Rowan
-.50	Charles	
-.46	Arthur	
-.44	Arnold	
-.29		Billy
-.28	Rajiv	
-.21		Neil
-.15		Jeffrey
-.12		Peter
.14	Benjamin	
.17		Boris

.21		Lawrence
.25	Matthew	
.32	Jed	
.37		Alan
.42	Jonathan	
.46	Adam	
.56	William	
.95		Terry, Jasper
.98	Darryl	
1.06		Justin
1.27		Darryl
1.37	Brian	
1.48		Jeremy

High range: positive attitude		
1.66	Jim	
1.76	Graham	
1.81		Bruno
2.13		Simon
2.71	Gabriel	Eric
2.89		Collin
3.04	Ricki	
3.18		Oscar

Section B

Summary of boys' references to books and comics through title and description according to attitudinal score

Negative attitude group

CHILD	TITLE	DESCRIPTION	COMIC
Alex (R)	Three Little Piggies The Ghost train	flying eagle	
Joel (R)	Wolfreen? book	about star fish	
Dennis (N)	Winnie the Pooh	sharks zoo	magazine
Rob (N)	Rupert Pinnochio Jack and the Beanstalk		
Darren (N)		horsey, horsey, horsey	magazine, superman one
Dan (N)		it's about all different songs it's all about lions and tigers it's about ABC	newspaper, cartoons Denis the Menace, Spiderman
Frank(R)	Peter Rabbit	zoo book underwater book swimming book 'in the wild'	Magazine, Denis the Menace
Arnold (R)	Lion King The Hungry Caterpillar	a skeleton one	I like looking at comics Power rangers Spiderman, Action Man, Denis the menace
Hideo (R)	Fireman Sam Postman Pat Winnie the Pooh		comic one

'Typical' attitude group

CHILD	TITLE	DESCRIPTION	COMIC
Billy (N)		a mouse book "it's got loads of mice and they all eat the cheese in the fridge..it's got good pictures	paper...news
Rowan (N)	Power Rangers Tom and Jerry		Denis the Menace (a book not a comic)
Alan (N)	Barney (" got a video about him)		A catalogue
Charles (R)	Miss Jump the Jockey		Book..Denis the Menace Magazine
Jack (N)	Flintsone books Aladdin		comic
Peter (N)		Father Christmas animal book	
Harry (R)		Jesus book scary books animal books	books from a comic shop
Henry (R)	My Captain Scarlet book		comic, Superman, Batman
Jeffrey (N)	Winnie the Pooh stories	a book, jungle...we watch it	
Arthur (R)	Sleeping Beauty	a dolphin story about going to the beach about the zoo a wild book	comic
Damion (N)		It's about a fly and a little bit of red. He hasn't got any friends and at the end he finds loads of friends and then all the book lights up with the flies	a boy's paper
Neil (N)		the farm the tractor book	Batman
Jonathan (R)			Comic Denis the Menace

CHILD	TITLE	DESCRIPTION	COMIC
Rajiv (R)	Jack and Jill	an information book (cos they have photos) the ADCD	
Saul (N)	Hungry Caterpillar	map	Comic
Lawrence (N)	Star Trek	Sea book	Comic
Boris (N)	The Hungry Caterpillar Three Bears and Goldilocks		Magazine, Spiderman
William (R)	Wilbur	pop up flap book sea life	Denis the Menace magazine
Darryl (R)	Little Red Hen Goosebumps Fireman Sam	caterpillar book little bear stories "The little cat who trying to go fast and she was called Ginger because a dog called that was trying to eat her" about a little bird	magazine, cartoon one Rugrat
Benjamin (R)	My Big Barney Book		
Jed (R)	Noddy Gets Into Trouble My Magnet Mr Tick the Teacher PERCY Park Keeper Go-Kart in Biff and Chip Jasper's Beanstalk Jack Happy Birthday	lift-the flap pop up	Fun day Times
Brian (R)		information books how birds live..a story book	magazine, Denis the Menace
Matthew (R)	Jack and Jill Postman Pat	a truck one a library book	magazine
Jasper (N)		flip flap..a Godzilla one	magazine, Thomas and Power Rangers
Terry (N)	Gingerbread man Big pancake	grown up books	Newspaper, cartoons

CHILD	TITLE	DESCRIPTION	COMIC
Adam (R)	Baby in the bath	animal story	
Graham (R)	Humpty Dumpty Jack and the Beanstalk	dolphin book	magazine, Spiderman Dinosaur magazine

Positive attitude group

CHILD	TITLE	DESCRIPTION	COMIC
Justin (N)		about racing about the rainbow about the jungle	magazine
Darryl (N)	Mr Happy		funny newspaper
Jeremy (N)	Elmer	underwater book, underground	kid's magazine, Barney cartoons
Gabriel (R)		teddy bears inside your body	
Jim (R)	Jack and the Beanstalk Thomas the tank Engine Robin Hood Puss in Boots		comic
Eric (N)	Simpson Star Wars	all about where the seas are	comic, Sonic
Collin (N)		one about the crocodile	
Bruno (N)	Mr Men Owl Song, Owl book Noddy Book		comic, Spiderman (just seen the video)
Bruno (R)	Jack and the Giant (reading book)	a looking book	
Oscar (N)	Goldilocks Little RedRiding Hood		newspaper Spiderman
Simon (N)		a bird book an aeroplane book	little magazine

Section C

Functions of reading identified at age five (excluding function of teacher story time)
Reception class group

Child	enjoyment "like" "nice" "fun"	enjoyment "wanted" "felt like"	bored/ nothing to do	compulsory	content of book	to get information	tiredness
Adam	****						
Alex	**						
Arnold	* * *1(comics)			* [1] *[2]			
Arthur	* * nice						
Benjamin	**	*					
Brian							
Charles				* to learn			
Darryl		**	**				*
Frank	*	*	*	* [3] * [4]			
Gabriel	** *nice			**5			
Graham	*						
Harry	*						
Henry	*						
Hideo							
Jim	*			*		*6 *7 *8	
Joel		**	* *	* 9			
Jonathan	**						
Jonathan		*					
Michael				*10			

[1] his mum is 'making him do reading'
[2] dad wants him to do reading 'to learn'
[3] it's a school book
[4] teacher said so
5 teacher wants them to; "you have to learn"
6 'they wanted to learn about music'
7 'he wants to get information from a book'
8 'he wanted to know something from the book'
9 I have to learn to read'
10 'because they have to sit down and read a book when they come in, because 'my teacher said them 'sit down with a book'

CHILD	Enjoyment "like"	Enjoyment "wanted" "felt like"	bored/nothing to do	compulsory	content of book	to get information	illustration
Rajiv		*					
Ricki	'it's fun'						
William	*				*		

Nursery Class Group

CHILD	Enjoyment "like"	Enjoyment "wanted" "felt like"	bored/nothing to do	compulsory	content of book	to get information	illustration	routine
Alan	*	*****						
Billy	*							*
Boris		***		*				
Bruno		*		*1				
Cameron	*							*bed-time *read-ing time
Collin	*							
Damion	***							
Dan	***	*						
Darren	*	*		**1				
Dennis	*	**		**1				
Derrick	*							
Eric	***	***						
Jack	**		*					
Jeffrey		**						
Jeremy			*			*		
Justin	**	**						
Lawrence	*	*						*bed-time
Neil		** comforting		*1				
Oscar								
Peter		comforting						*bed-time
Rob		***						
Rowan	** it's nice							
Saul	***							
Simon	**							
Terry	**						*	

Each star in the table represents a specific reference by the child to the function of reading specified in the table. The references did not necessarily represent the child's own feelings but rather an understanding that reading could have these functions for others. The footnotes give examples of how the children illustrated their particular perception of the function of reading.

APPENDIX 5

APPENDIX 5

Section A

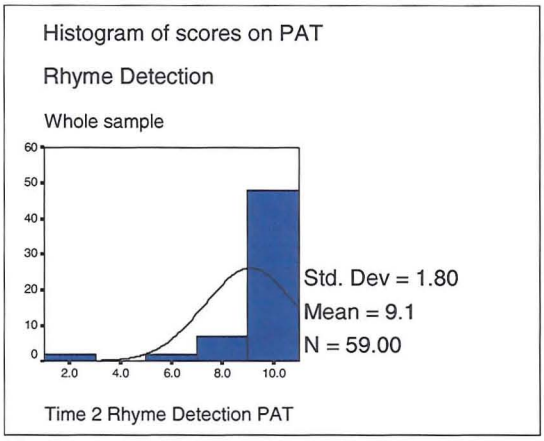


Figure A.5.1

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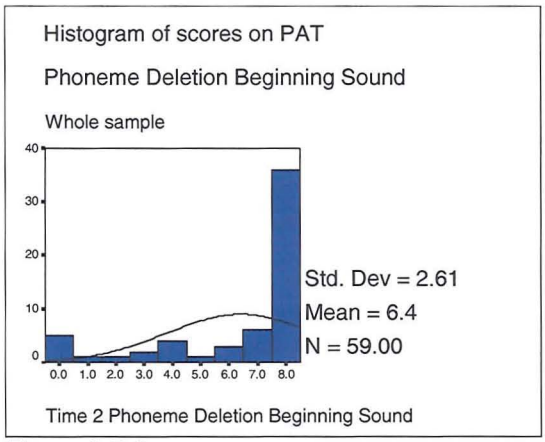


Figure A.5.2

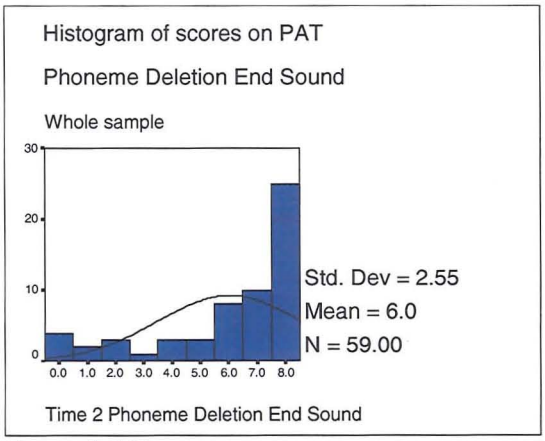
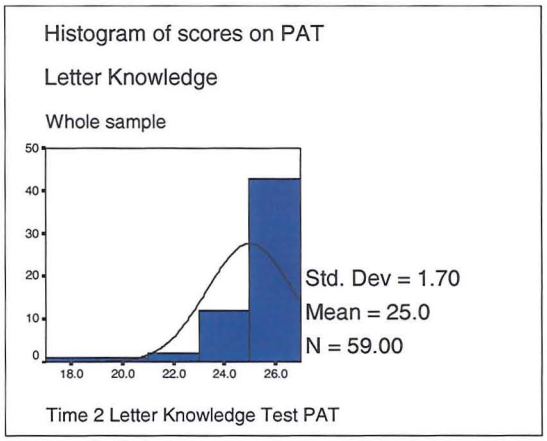


Figure A.5.3


Histogram of scores on PAT
Letter Knowledge
Whole sample
50
40
30
20
10
0
18.0
20.0
22.0
24.0
26.0
Std. Dev = 1.70
Mean = 25.0
N = 59.00
Time 2 Letter Knowledge Test PAT
Figure A.5.4

Section B

Descriptive Statistics

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Photographic reading Attitude Instrument 1	59	1.00	3.00	2.46	.70
Photographic Reading Attitude Instrument 2	59	1.00	3.00	2.49	.63
Photographic Reading Attitude Instrument 3	59	1.00	3.00	1.98	.84
Photographic Reading Attitude Instrument 4	59	1.00	3.00	2.47	.70
Photographic Reading Attitude Instrument 5	59	1.00	3.00	2.08	.84
Photographic Reading Attitude Instrument 6	59	1.00	3.00	2.46	.68
Photographic Reading Attitude Instrument 7	59	1.00	3.00	2.03	.89
Photographic Reading Attitude Instrument 8	59	1.00	3.00	2.37	.67
Photographic Reading Attitude Instrument 9	59	1.00	3.00	1.88	.83
Photographic Reading Attitude Instrument 10	59	1.00	3.00	2.07	.87
Photographic Reading Attitude Instrument 11	59	1.00	3.00	2.37	.72
Photographic Reading Attitude Instrument 12	59	1.00	3.00	2.17	.79
Photographic Reading Attitude Instrument 13	59	1.00	3.00	2.25	.80
Photographic Reading Attitude Instrument 14	59	1.00	3.00	2.54	.75
Photographic Reading Attitude Instrument 15	59	1.00	3.00	2.25	.78
Photographic Reading Attitude Instrument 16	59	1.00	3.00	2.05	.82
Photographic Reading Attitude Instrument	59	1.00	3.00	2.41	.79
Photographic Reading Attitude Instrument 18	59	1.00	3.00	2.27	.72
Photographic Reading Attitude Instrument 19	59	1.00	3.00	2.25	.88
Valid N (listwise)	59				

Table A.5.1

Tests of Normality

	Kolmogorov-Smirnov[a]		
	Statistic	df	Sig.
Time 2 RSCS Difficulty with Reading	.117	59	.045
Time 2 Reading Self Concept Scale Competence in Reading	.109	59	.079
Time 2 Reading Self Concept Scale Attitude Towards Reading	.193	59	.000
Time 2 Reading Self Concept Scale Total Score	.089	59	.200*
Time 2 Prai Total Score	.109	59	.076
Time 2 Letter Knowledge Test PAT	.312	59	.000
Time 2 Rhyme Detection PAT	.318	59	.000
Time 2 Phoneme Deletion Beginning Sound	.339	59	.000
Time 2 Phoneme Deletion End Sound	.241	59	.000

*. This is a lower bound of the true significance.

a. Lilliefors Significance Correction

Table A.5.2

Section C

Group Statistics

	GROUP	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Time 2 prai1	Reception	28	2.46	.51	9.60E-02
	Nursery	30	2.83	.46	8.42E-02
Time 2 Prai 5	Reception	28	1.96	.58	.11
	Nursery	31	2.32	.70	.13

Table A.5.3

Independent Samples Test

		t-test for Equality of Means		
		t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Time 2 prai1	Equal variances assumed	-2.900	56	.005
	Equal variances not assumed	-2.891	54.496	.006
Time 2 Prai 5	Equal variances assumed	-2.130	57	.038
	Equal variances not assumed	-2.151	56.514	.036

Table A 5.4

Section D

No tape-recordings from: Adam, Alan, Benjamin, Damion, Dennis, Gabriel, Kevin, Rajiv

Functions of reading identified at age six
Reception class group

CHILD	enjoyment 'like'	Enjoyment 'wanted'	Bored/nothing to do	Compulsory
Alex				*1
Amit	*	*		* *2
Arnold	* *			
Arthur				*
Brian	**			*
Charles				
Darryl	*	*		
Frank				* *
Graham				
Harry		*		
Henry	*		**	
Hideo	*			*3
Jed	* *			
Jim	**			*
Joel				
Jonathan	**			*
Kenny				* *
Martin	* mum 4			
Matthew				
Michael				
Percy				*
Richard				*
Ricki	*			
William	* re:comics			
Zak	*			* 5

1 his dad asked him to
2 because she wants us to do work ; because it's work
3 the teacher said
4 because she likes reading with her kid
5 she wants all the homework done

CHILD	content of book	to get information	tiredness	illustration
Alex				
Amit				
Arnold				
Arthur				
Brian				
Charles	*			
Darryl				
Frank	* * funny			
Graham				
Harry	*			
Henry				
Hideo	*			
Jed				
Jim				
Joel				
Jonathan				
Kenny				
Martin	*6 * *			
Matthew				
Michael				
Percy				
Richard				
Ricki				
William				
Zak				

6 they want to know what is happening in the books

CHILD	to learn	for reward	for adulthood	routine
Alex		*reward for working hard		
Amit	*			*finished work *8
Arnold	*[7]			
Arthur				
Brian				
Charles	*			
Darryl				*[8]
Frank			*	
Graham				
Harry				
Henry				
Hideo	*	*		
Jed		*		
Jim				
Joel				*8
Jonathan				*8
Kenny	**			
Martin				
Matthew				
Michael	*			
Percy				
Richard	**			
Ricki	*			
William	***			
Zak				

Nursery class group

CHILD	enjoyment 'like' 'it's fun'	enjoyment 'wanted'	bored/nothing to do	compulsory
Billy	* *			
Boris		* *		*
Bruno	*[9]			*[10]
Cameron	*			
Carl	*		***	
Collin				*11
Dan				*
Darren				* it must be a reading book * (same)

7 to learn about books
8 at the end of the day we don't have anything to do..it's early to go home
8 They are just for reading and they make you all excited because in chapter books you want to read more and more and you want to go on to another chapter
9 She's got to read it because she won't know the words so she won't be able to read it to her teacher and then the teacher will angry.
11 every night you have to read to your mum

Derrick	*			
Dominic	* *			* *[12]
Eric	******			
Jack	*	* **		*13
Jasper				
Jeffrey	* *			* I always have to do it * you always have to do it * teacher is telling them to read
Jeremy	*			*
Justin	*			
Lawrence	*dad	*		* * their teacher said so
Neil		*		
Oscar	*			
Peter				* [14]
Rob	* *	*		
Rowan	* it's fun *** * * * *dad*			
Sammy				
Saul	* *enjoys *	*		
Simon	**			
Terry	* *			
Tim			*	* teacher *

CHILD	content of book	to get information	tiredness	illustration
Billy				
Boris				
Bruno		*		
Cameron	*		*	
Carl				
Collin				
Dan				
Darren				
Derrick				
Dominic		* *		
Eric				
Jack				
Jasper				
Jeffrey				
Jeremy		*		

11parent and teacher want them to learn the words
13 she (mum) tells me we are going to read it
13 we have to read books at home

Justin				
Lawrence		To learn about Jesus		
Neil	*			
Oscar		*to know about woodlices		
Peter				
Rob				
Rowan		* to learn about fishes		
Sammy				
Saul				
Simon	*			
Terry	* * *re comics..they're funny			
Tim		* * *		

CHILD	To learn		for adulthood	routine
Billy				
Boris	**			
Bruno	*			*Waiting for others
Cameron	*			
Carl				
Collin	*			
Dan				*
Darren	*			
Derrick				
Dominic	**	to learn the words		* reading time
Eric				
Jack				
Jasper	**			
Jeffrey	*	so I can read		
Jeremy				

Justin	***	he needs to be able to read		
Lawrence	**	So you can learn		*library time *bedtime
Neil				*
Oscar	**			
Peter	*			*finished work
Rob	*			
Rowan				
Sammy	*			
Saul				
Simon				
Terry	***		*	
Tim	**	he wants to learn how you read them		waiting for others

Each star in the table represents a specific reference by the child to the function of reading specified in the table. The references did not necessarily represent the child's own feelings but rather an understanding that reading could have these functions for others. The footnotes give examples of how the children illustrated their particular perception of the function of reading.

APPENDIX 6

Section A

Reading achievement scores for whole sample (Neale Analysis of Reading Ability)

		Neale accuracy raw scores	Neale compre-hension Raw scores	Standardised attitude scores[1]	RSCS difficulty sub-scale	RSCS attitude sub-scale	RSCS compe-tence sub-scale
1	Darryl (R)	28	8	missing	33	45	43
2	Charles (R)	36	17	0.05	25	41	30
3	Joel (R)	21	10	missing	34	43	31
4	Alex (R)	24	9	-1.71	32	18	15
5	Frank (R)	25	8	-0.29	36	45	30
6	Harry (R)	43	12	0.30	32	38	34
7	Jonathan (R)	missing	missing	missing	missing	missing	missing
8	Michael (R)	41	12	0.64	38	48	36
9	Jed (R)	55	20	1.05	38	48	42
10	William (R)	46	17	0.42	47	44	40
11	Arnold (R)	40	13	0.93	39	48	36
12	Arthur (R)	35	15	0.64	32	44	39
13	Benjamin (R)	41	9	-0.24	42	36	25
14	Gabriel (R)	30	7	-0.33	24	36	22
15	Adam (R)	36	11	-1.70	25	26	19
16	Ricki (R)	26	6	-1.25	37	30	32
17	Henry (R)	27	10	-0.68	32	37	28
18	Jim (R)	72	19	0.76	46	43	46
19	Rajiv (R)	20	8	-0.28	37	42	26
20	Richard (R)	42	12	-0.11	38	45	32
21	Percy (R)	9	4	1.42	36	44	41
22	Kenny (R)	1	4	0.91	32	35	35
23	Zak (R)	13	3	-0.42	46	44	42
24	Martin (R)	43	9	0.71	49	48	42
25	Brian (R)	42	15	-0.03	28	37	24
26	Matthew (R)	32	5	-0.01	37	35	38
27	Graham (R)	missing	missing	missing	missing	missing	missing
28	Hideo (R)	47	9	-0.19	27	46	24
29	Amit (R)	37	12	-1.60	25	29	33
30	Jack (N)	43	8	0.77	47	40	38
31	Eric (N)	25	9	-0.49	24	29	29
32	Damion (N)	43	13	-0.11	34	38	41
33	Dominic (N)	14	10	-0.99	18	25	25
34	Tim (N)	11	9	-1.46	19	19	24
35	Bruno (N)	34	12	-0.75	33	35	27
36	Rowan (N)	11	10	0.32	37	48	42
37	Alan (N)	18	10	0.63	33	35	29
38	Saul (N)	50	7	-1.06	32	28	28
39	Dennis (N)	32	8	1.41	34	43	41
40	Jeffrey (N)	32	8	-0.65	30	37	38

[1] ERAS, PRAI and RSCS sub-scale attitude

41	Lawrence (N)	58	20	-0.15	39	35	43
42	Darren (N)	missing	missing	missing	36	48	41
43	Terry (N)	15	9	0.83	39	39	37
44	Justin (N)	29	8	0.85	43	48	43
45	Oscar (N)	32	11	-0.97	28	19	24
46	Peter (N)	27	10	1.03	31	37	28
47	Dan (N)	38	10	missing	38	30	33
48	Neil (N)	10	8	0.38	42	46	45
49	Rob (N)	42	10	-0.52	34	41	38
50	Collin (N)	35	10	0.45	39	46	41
51	Derrick (N)	24	7	0.00	28	37	28
52	Simon (N)	49	18	0.85	34	37	41
53	Jeremy (N)	43	18	0.89	37	48	34
54	Cameron (N)	37	17	0.65	34	46	38
55	Jasper (N)	27	16	-0.58	27	43	35
56	Kevin (N)	9	2	-1.19	27	19	19
57	Sammy (N)	10	4	-0.41	25	31	26
58	Carl (N)	34	13	0.55	34	42	38
59	Billy (N)	41	13	-0.24	36	39	39
60	Boris (N)	47	19	0.57	36	47	41

Tests of Normality

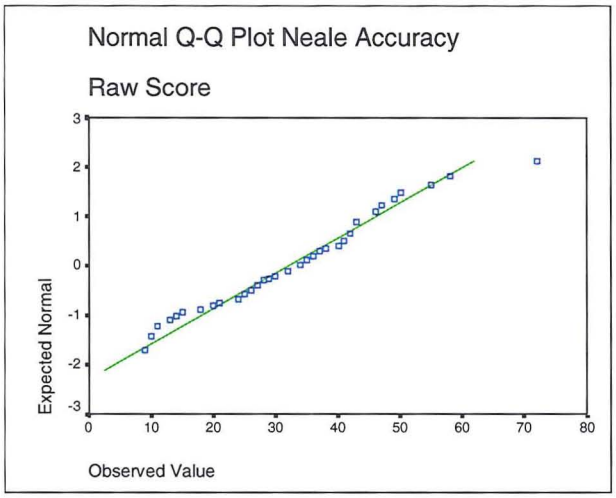
	Kolmogorov-Smirnov[a]		
	Statistic	df	Sig.
Neale Accuracy Raw Score	.080	57	.200*
Neale Comprehension Raw Score	.162	57	.001

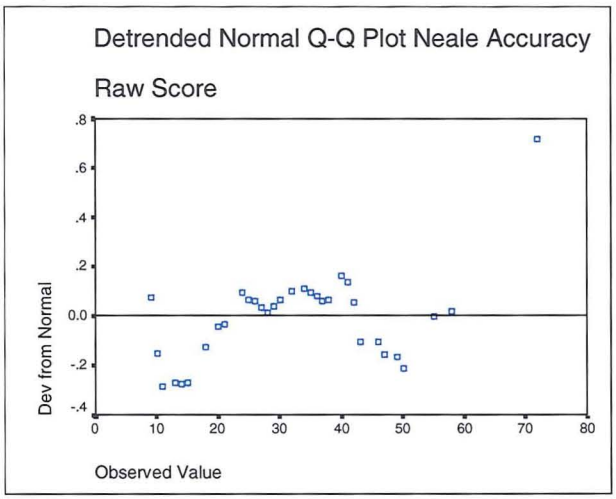
*. This is a lower bound of the true significance.

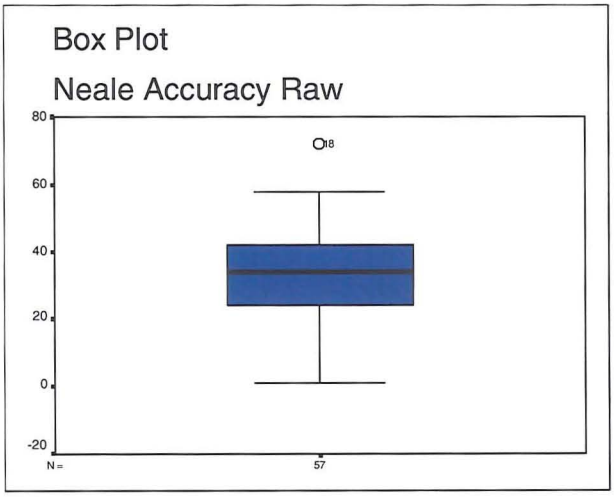
a. Lilliefors Significance Correction

Neale Accuracy Raw Scores

```
Neale Accuracy Raw Score Stem-and-Leaf Plot

 Frequency     Stem &  Leaf

     3.00        0 .  199
     8.00        1 .  00113458
    12.00        2 .  014455677789
    14.00        3 .  02222445566778
    16.00        4 .  0111222333336779
     3.00        5 .  058
     1.00 Extremes    (>=72)

 Stem width:     10.00
 Each leaf:       1 case(s)
```


Normal Q-Q Plot Neale Accuracy
Raw Score
Expected Normal
Observed Value
3
2
1
0
-1
-2
-3
0
10
20
30
40
50
60
70
80


Detrended Normal Q-Q Plot Neale Accuracy
Raw Score
Dev from Normal
Observed Value
.8
.6
.4
.2
0.0
-.2
-.4
0
10
20
30
40
50
60
70
80

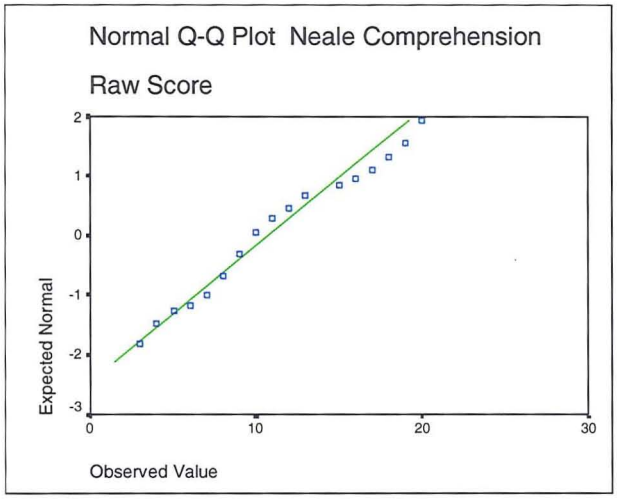

Box Plot
Neale Accuracy Raw
80
60
40
20
0
-20
18
N=
57

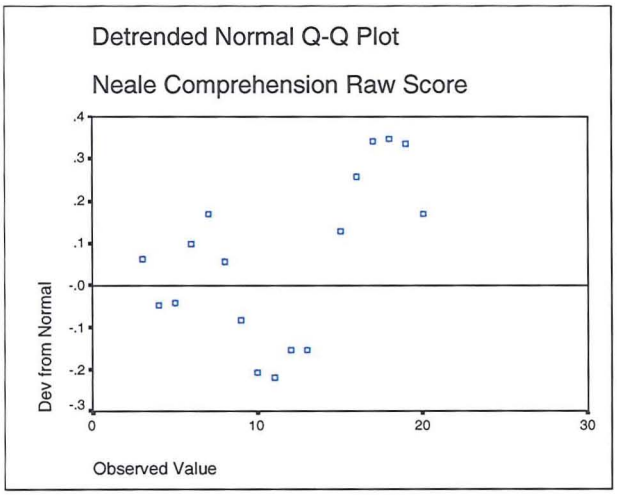
Neale Comprehension Raw Scores

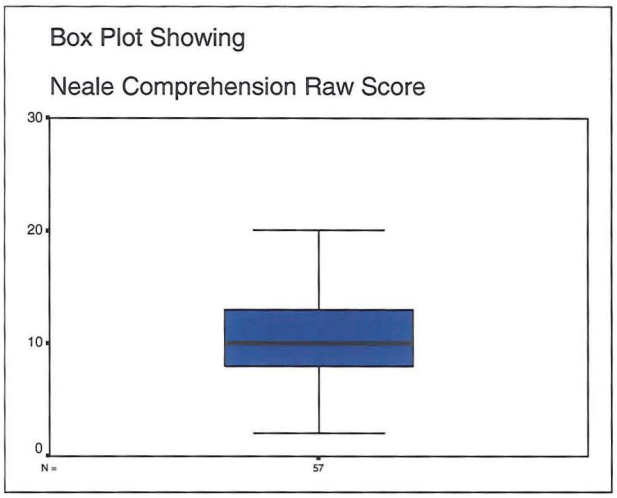
Neale Comprehension Raw Score Stem-and-Leaf Plot

Frequency	Stem &	Leaf
5.00	0 .	23444
20.00	0 .	56777888888889999999
20.00	1 .	00000000011222223333
10.00	1 .	5567778899
2.00	2 .	00

Stem width: 10.00
Each leaf: 1 case(s)







Section B

Descriptive Statistics

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Minimum	Maximum
Neale Test Accuracy Months	57	84.09	17.89	.00	121.00
Neale Test Comprehension Months	57	83.23	12.19	61.00	110.00

Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test

Ranks

		N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks
Neale Test Comprehension Months - Neale Test Accuracy Months	Negative Ranks	32[a]	28.25	904.00
	Positive Ranks	23[b]	27.65	636.00
	Ties	2[c]		
	Total	57		

a. Neale Test Comprehension Months < Neale Test Accuracy Months

b. Neale Test Comprehension Months > Neale Test Accuracy Months

c. Neale Test Accuracy Months = Neale Test Comprehension Months

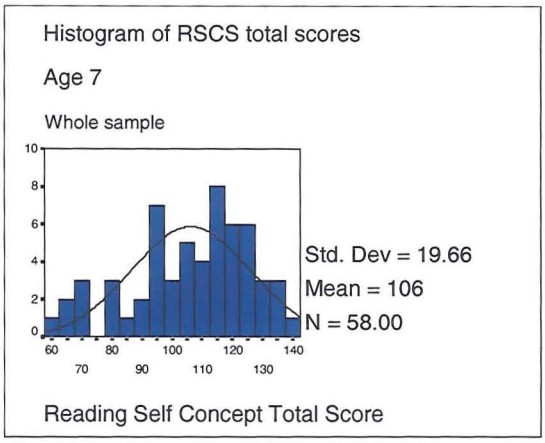
Test Statistics[b]

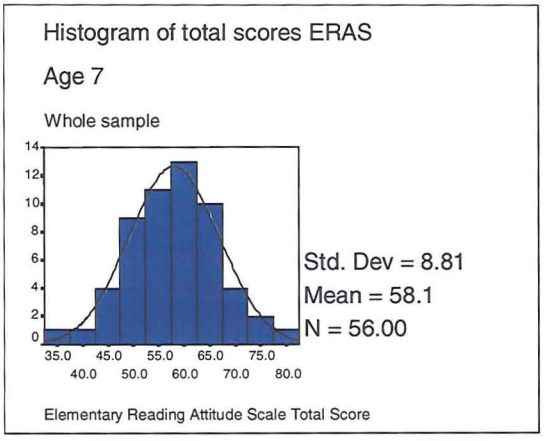
	Neale Test Comprehension Months - Neale Test Accuracy Months
Z	-1.124[a]
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	.261

a. Based on positive ranks.

b. Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test

Section C



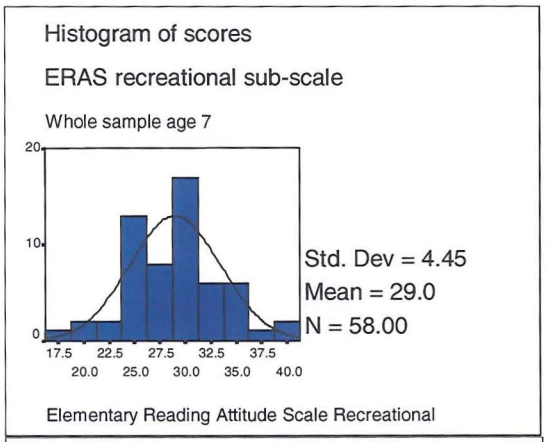


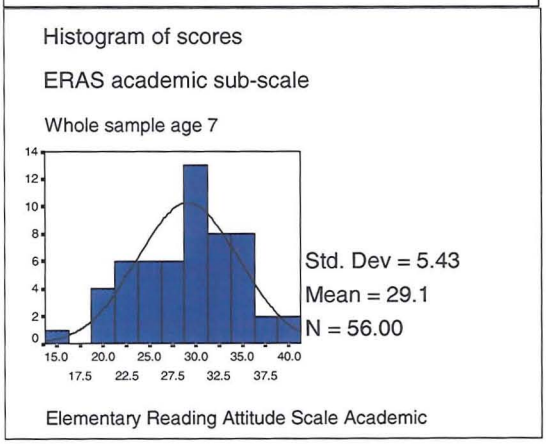
Tests of Normality

	Kolmogorov-Smirnov[a]		
	Statistic	df	Sig.
Reading Self Concept Total Score	.099	55	.200*
Reading Self Concept Scale Difficulty	.094	55	.200*
Reading Self Concept Scale Attitude	.137	55	.012
Reading Self Concept Scale Competence	.141	55	.008
Elementary Reading Attitude Scale Total Score	.075	55	.200*
Elementary Reading Attitude Scale Academic	.109	55	.155
Elementary Reading Attitude Scale Recreational Reading	.095	55	.200*
Photographic Reading Attitude Instrument Total Score	.124	55	.034

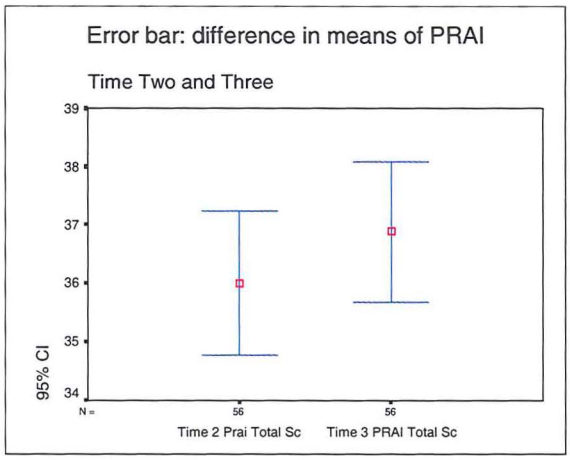
*. This is a lower bound of the true significance.

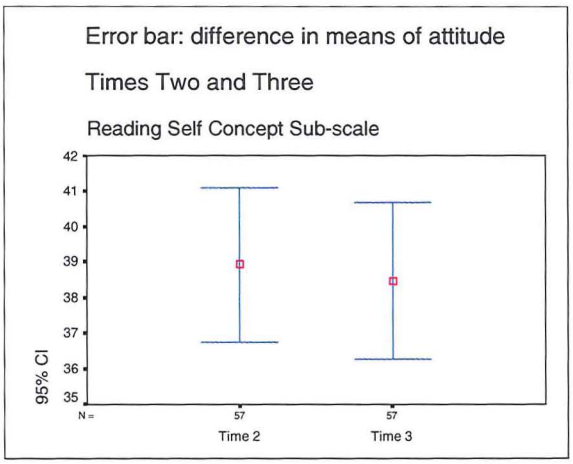
a. Lilliefors Significance Correction

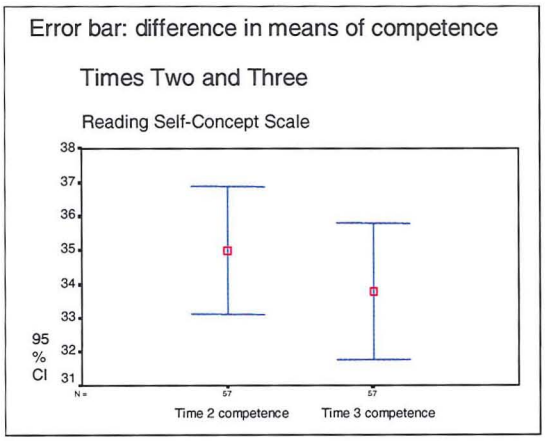


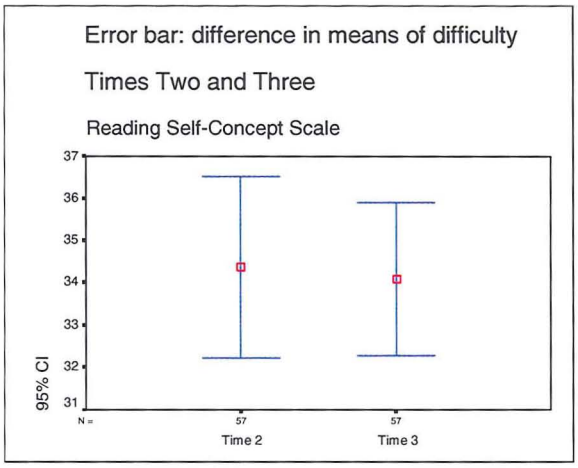


Section D


Error bar: difference in means of PRAI
Time Two and Three
95% CI
39
38
37
36
35
34
N =
56
56
Time 2 Prai Total Sc
Time 3 PRAI Total Sc


Error bar: difference in means of attitude
Times Two and Three
Reading Self Concept Sub-scale
95% CI
42
41
40
39
38
37
36
35
N =
57
57
Time 2
Time 3


Error bar: difference in means of competence
Times Two and Three
Reading Self-Concept Scale
95 % CI
38
37
36
35
34
33
32
31
N =
57
57
Time 2 competence
Time 3 competence


Error bar: difference in means of difficulty
Times Two and Three
Reading Self-Concept Scale
95% CI
37
36
35
34
33
32
31
N =
57
57
Time 2
Time 3

Section E
Correlations beteen three reading attitude scales (PRAI, RSCS and ERAS) at the end of Key Stage One

Correlations

		Time 3 PRAI Total Score	Time Three Reading Self Concept Total Score	Reading Self Concept Scale Attitude	Time 3 Reading Self Concept Scale Competence	Time 3 Reading Self Concept Scale Difficulty	Elementary Reading Attitude Scale Total Score	Elementary Reading Attitude Scale Recreational Reading	Elementary Reading Attitude Scale Academic
Time 3 PRAI Total Score	Pearson Correlation	1.00	.24	.31*	.19	.09	.61**	.57**	.50**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.08	.02	.15	.50	.00	.00	.00
	N	56.00	56.00	56.00	56.00	56.00	54.00	56.00	54.00
Time Three Reading Self Concept Total Score	Pearson Correlation	.24	1.00	.88**	.89**	.83**	.53**	.36**	.56**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.08	.	.00	.00	.00	.00	.01	.00
	N	56.00	58.00	58.00	58.00	58.00	56.00	58.00	56.00
Reading Self Concept Scale Attitude	Pearson Correlation	.31*	.88**	1.00	.69**	.58**	.58**	.40**	.60**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.02	.00	.	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00
	N	56.00	58.00	58.00	58.00	58.00	56.00	58.00	56.00
Time 3 Reading Self Concept Scale Competence	Pearson Correlation	.19	.89**	.69**	1.00	.64**	.47**	.35**	.46**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.15	.00	.00	.	.00	.00	.01	.00
	N	56.00	58.00	58.00	58.00	58.00	56.00	58.00	56.00
Time 3 Reading Self Concept Scale Difficulty	Pearson Correlation	.09	.83**	.58**	.64**	1.00	.32*	.16	.39**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.50	.00	.00	.00	.	.02	.23	.00
	N	56.00	58.00	58.00	58.00	58.00	56.00	58.00	56.00
Elementary Reading Attitude Scale Total Score	Pearson Correlation	.61**	.53**	.58**	.47**	.32*	1.00	.87**	.91**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.00	.00	.00	.00	.02	.	.00	.00
	N	54.00	56.00	56.00	56.00	56.00	56	56	56
Elementary Reading Attitude Scale Recreational Reading	Pearson Correlation	.57**	.36**	.40**	.35**	.16	.87**	1.00	.59**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.00	.01	.00	.01	.23	.00	.	.00
	N	56.00	58.00	58.00	58.00	58.00	56.00	58.00	56.00
Elementary Reading Attitude Scale Academic	Pearson Correlation	.50**	.56**	.60**	.46**	.39**	.91**	.59**	1.00
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00	.
	N	54.00	56.00	56.00	56.00	56.00	56.00	56.00	56.00

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Section F
Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test

Ranks

		N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks
Reading Self Concept Scale Attitude - Time 3 Reading Self Concept Scale Competence	Negative Ranks	11[a]	15.77	173.50
	Positive Ranks	41[b]	29.38	1204.50
	Ties	6[c]		
	Total	58		
Reading Self Concept Scale Attitude - Time 3 Reading Self Concept Scale Difficulty	Negative Ranks	14[d]	21.00	294.00
	Positive Ranks	42[e]	31.00	1302.00
	Ties	2[f]		
	Total	58		

a. Reading Self Concept Scale Attitude < Time 3 Reading Self Concept Scale Competence

b. Reading Self Concept Scale Attitude > Time 3 Reading Self Concept Scale Competence

c. Time 3 Reading Self Concept Scale Competence = Reading Self Concept Scale Attitude

d. Reading Self Concept Scale Attitude < Time 3 Reading Self Concept Scale Difficulty

e. Reading Self Concept Scale Attitude > Time 3 Reading Self Concept Scale Difficulty

f. Time 3 Reading Self Concept Scale Difficulty = Reading Self Concept Scale Attitude

Test Statistics[b]

	Reading Self Concept Scale Attitude - Reading Self Concept Scale Competence	Reading Self Concept Scale Attitude Reading Self Concept Scale Difficulty
Z	-4.699[a]	-4.115[a]
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000

a. Based on negative ranks.

b. Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test

Section G

T test

Group Statistics

	GROUP	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Time Three Reading Self Concept Total Score	Reception	27	107.67	19.00
	Nursery	31	105.06	20.46
Reading Self Concept Scale Attitude	Reception	27	39.81	7.49
	Nursery	31	37.26	8.78
Time 3 Reading Self Concept Scale	Reception	27	32.78	8.02
	Nursery	31	34.65	7.12
Time 3 Reading Self Concept Scale Difficulty	Reception	27	35.07	6.99
	Nursery	31	33.16	6.52
Elementary Reading Attitude Scale Total Score	Reception	26	57.62	9.91
	Nursery	30	58.43	7.89
Elementary Reading Attitude Scale	Reception	27	28.74	5.19
	Nursery	31	29.23	3.76
Elementary Reading Attitude Scale Academic	Reception	26	29.12	5.79
	Nursery	30	29.17	5.19
PRAITRAN	Reception	26	6.02	.36
	Nursery	31	6.11	.36

Independent Samples Test

		t-test for Equality of Means		
		t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
RSCS total	Equal variances assumed	.50	56.00	.62
	Equal variances not assumed	.50	55.75	.62
RSCS attitude	Equal variances assumed	1.18	56.00	.24
	Equal variances not assumed	1.20	55.98	.24
RSCS competence	Equal variances assumed	-.94	56.00	.35
	Equal variances not assumed	-.93	52.50	.36
RSCS difficulty	Equal variances assumed	1.08	56.00	.29
	Equal variances not assumed	1.07	53.63	.29
ERAS total	Equal variances assumed	-.34	54.00	.73
	Equal variances not assumed	-.34	47.61	.74
ERAS recreational	Equal variances assumed	-.41	56.00	.68
	Equal variances not assumed	-.40	46.70	.69
ERAS academic	Equal variances assumed	-.03	54.00	.97
	Equal variances not assumed	-.03	50.71	.97
PRAI square root transformation	Equal variances assumed	-.95	55.00	.35
	Equal variances not assumed	-.95	53.28	.35

Section H

Regression

Variables Entered/Removed[b]

Model	Variables Entered	Variables Removed	Method
1	Literacy time one[a]	.	Enter
2	Zscore: British Picture Vocabulary Scal[a]	.	Enter

a. All requested variables entered.

b. Dependent Variable: Neale Accuracy Raw Score

Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.51[a]	.26	.25	12.22
2	.51[b]	.27	.24	12.33

a. Predictors: (Constant), Literacy time one

b. Predictors: (Constant), Literacy time one, Zscore: British Picture Vocabulary Scal

ANOVA[c]

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	2786.76	1	2786.76	18.67	.000[a]
	Residual	7760.50	52	149.24		
	Total	10547.26	53			
2	Regression	2795.20	2	1397.60	9.19	.000[b]
	Residual	7752.06	51	152.00		
	Total	10547.26	53			

a. Predictors: (Constant), Literacy time one

b. Predictors: (Constant), Literacy time one, Zscore: British Picture Vocabulary Scal

c. Dependent Variable: Neale Accuracy Raw Score

Coefficients[a]

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	32.56	1.66		19.57	.000
	Literacy time one	10.74	2.49	.51	4.32	.000
2	(Constant)	32.52	1.69		19.28	.000
	Literacy time one	10.49	2.73	.50	3.84	.000
	Zscore: British Picture Vocabulary Scal	.46	1.96	.03	.24	.81

a. Dependent Variable: Neale Accuracy Raw Score

Excluded Variables[b]

Model		Beta In	t	Sig.	Partial Correlation	Collinearity Statistics
						Tolerance
1	Zscore: British Picture Vocabulary Scal	.03[a]	.24	.81	.03	.84

a. Predictors in the Model: (Constant), Literacy time one

b. Dependent Variable: Neale Accuracy Raw Score

Variables Entered/Removed[b]

Model	Variables Entered	Variables Removed	Method
1	Literacy time one[a]	.	Enter
2	Zscore: British Picture Vocabulary Scal[a]	.	Enter

a. All requested variables entered.

b. Dependent Variable: Neale Comprehension Raw Score

Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.63[a]	.40	.39	3.46
2	.67[b]	.45	.42	3.35

a. Predictors: (Constant), Literacy time one

b. Predictors: (Constant), Literacy time one, Zscore: British Picture Vocabulary Scal

Coefficients[a]

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	10.676	.471		22.659	.000
	Literacy time one	4.123	.704	.631	5.858	.000
2	(Constant)	10.581	.459		23.064	.000
	Literacy time one	3.510	.742	.537	4.729	.000
	Zscore: British Picture Vocabulary Scal	1.115	.533	.237	2.092	.041

a. Dependent Variable: Neale Comprehension Raw Score

Excluded Variables[b]

Model		Beta In	t	Sig.	Partial Correlation	Collinearity Statistics
						Tolerance
1	Zscore: British Picture Vocabulary Scal	.24[a]	2.09	.04	.28	.84

a. Predictors in the Model: (Constant), Literacy time one

b. Dependent Variable: Neale Comprehension Raw Score

Appendix 7

Section A

STANDARDIZED SCORE	RECEPTION BOY	NURSERY BOY
Low range: negative attitude		
-1.71	Alex	
-1.70	Adam	
-1.60	Amit	
-1.46		Tim
-1.25	Ricki	
-1.19		Kevin
-1.06		Saul
-0.99		Dominic
Middle range: 'typical'		
-0.97		Oscar
-0.75		Bruno
-.68	Henry	
-0.65		Jeffrey
-0.58		Jasper
-0.52		Rob
-0.49		Eric
-0.42	Zak	
-0.41		Sammy
-.33	Gabriel	
-.29	Frank	
-.28	Rajiv	
-.24	Benjamin	
-0.24		Billy
-0.19	Hideo	
-0.15		Lawrence
-.11	Richard	
-0.11		Damion
-0.03	Brian	
-0.01	Matthew	
00		Derrick
.05	Charles	
.30	Harry	
0.32		Rowan
0.38		Neil

0.42	William	
0.45		Collin
0.55		Carl
0.57		Boris
0.63		Alan
0.64	Michael	
0.64	Arthur	
0.65		Cameron
0.71	Martin	
0.76	Jim	
0.77		Jack
0.83		Terry

High range: positive attitude		
0.85		Justin
0.85		Simon
0.89		Jeremy
0.91	Kenny	
0.93	Arnold	
1.03		Peter
1.05	Jed	
1.41		Dennis
1.42	Percy	

Transcripts missing for Dan, Graham and Jonathan
Partial data sets due to absence: Darren, Darryl and Joel
Boys highlighted in purple are referred to individually in the text

Section B

Range of reading at age 7
Negative attitude group

TITLE	SUBJECT	GENRE	Comic title	OTHER	ID
Goldilocks Biff and Chip		Cartoon magazine			Alex (R)
Kitty books The secret Garden	It's about this big hippopotamus It's got jokes in it	Picture book Information Non-fiction			Adam (R)
Roald Dahl James & the Giant Peach The Small Soldiers		information	Spiderman		Amit (R)
Biff and Chip and Floppy		Information-type stuff Fact book			Ricki (R)
Magic carrot	Dinosaur book	Comic book			Tim (N)
Three Little Pigs Disneyland books Mr Man Red Ted		Comics Flap-book	Pokemon Tom and Jerry Action Man		Kevin (N)
Mr Gumpy Rainbow Fish		Fiction Non-fiction Comic information	Dandy	The blue books (graded for group reading)	Saul (N)
	Fighting stories Discovery book				Dominic (N)

'Typical' middle range

Star wars book	Book about space About your body	Flap-book Information book comic			Oscar
Mr Fussy Demon Headmaster Harry Potter	Dinosaurs Books about Chip and stuff	Fiction/non-fiction (muddled about which is which but knows the difference) Comic Big chapter books	Denis the Menace Spiderman Lego comic		Bruno
		Information book Comic	Denis the Menace	School books	Henry
Big bag of Worries	Poetry books Animal books	comic			Jeffrey
Lion and the Mouse	Animal and Habitats	Fairy tales Un-fiction comic	Denis the menace		Jasper
	animal	Magazines Kids newspaper			Rob
Mr Jump the Jockey Anancy stories	Animal Moats and castle				Eric
Garfield	Bones, people, planets, dinosaurs	Cook books comics	Sonic		Zak
Art Attack	Space ship dinosaur	Cartoon magazine		Gold star and double gold star Double white triangle	Sammy
Magic Finger	Adventure	Information book comic			Gabriel
		Pop-up book	Denis the Menace		Frank
Spot the Dog Thomas the Tank Engine Quacky Duck Georgie and the Dragon	Dinosaur Things about God Farms Jungle books	Informationbook	Denis the Menace		Rajiv

Hop on Pop Are You My Mother Disney (Peter Pan)	Football books WWF books		Beano		Benjamin
Harry Potter Tortoise and the Fox	Reading books Library books Funny sad	Newspaper comic		Grey level	Billy
Fireman Sam Scribble Sam Tiger Who Came to Tea		Dictionary comic	Fireman Sam Dandy Thomas the Tank Engine Telletubbies		Hideo
	animals	information			Lawrence
Biff & Chip Tell us a story	The one about me called dinosaur adventure 'normal books' as oppose to reading books The fox and the badger Space books	Fiction books comic	Dandy Sonic Action man		Richard
	football				Damion
	Poems animals	Information Fiction comic	Beano		Brian
Chicken run	Car books trucks		Scooby do, Toy Story, pokemon		Matthew
Mr Tickle Rupert	animals	Atlas Magazine (cartoon network)			Derrick
Katy Morag and the New Pier Harry Potter Goosebumps Kim and the computer Giant Miss Jum the Jockey			Pokemon		Charles
Katy Morag Bible		Adventure, information comic	Dandy		Harry

Robin and the treasure chest		Fiction Flip-up book Non-fiction	Denis the menace Superman Batman		Rowan
One-eyed Jake	Dinosaur books	Information comic	Denis the menace		Neil
JK Rowling Secret Seven Harry Potter Katy Morag Secret Garden		Non-fiction comics			William
James Bond Bug's Life Plop	Scary funny	Information magazine	superhero		Collin
	underwater	Children's book Adult's bks Teenagers books information	Magazine Denis the Menace		Boris
Hansel and Gretel 1000 questions and answers Harry Potter	"my big dinosaur book"	Fiction Non-fiction Comic information			Carl
Not now Bernard Tooth Fairy Buster "Adult books on Star Wars" Your First Stick Insects How to look after Rabbits	Space magazine	comics	Pokemon		Alan
Roald Dahl books Charlie and the chocloate factory Ten Big Fat Men		Dandy book magazine			Michael
Harry Potter Stephen King	Reptile books	Comic books	Beano		Arthur
	Animals World books	Non-fiction comic	Pop-eye	talks about his animal bk in detail. Also a book with bones inside it	Cameron

Harry Potter The Snowman The Secret Garden	Space book	newspaper	Scooby doo		Martin
Ponds and Streams	Story tapes like 'cold feet'	Fact Comic information			Jim
Fantastic Mr Fox	rainforests	information	Dandy		Jack
	Animals Dinosaurs Books about Jesus	Information books Comic books	Beano	has keen knowledge of facts eg re dinosaurs	Terry

Positive attitude group

One-eyed Jake Chicken Chips and Peas	Dinosaur books Rainforests Racing, car-racing	Information books Flip-up book			Justin
Harry Potter Knights and Castles		Information book comic			Simon
Roald Dahl George's Marvellous Medicine	Dinosaur books Animal ones	Fairy tales Information comic			Jeremy
Rugrats in Paris Frog Prince Frog Prince Two True Story of the three little Piggies Simpsons Letterland	vehicles	Information books	Denis comic Sonic		Kenny
BFG Books from the Bible	Story collection Ancient Egypt Animals dinosaur	Adventures comic	Spiderman	Has clear picture of stories in his head although can't always remember titles	Arnold

	Ocean Things from a long time ago	Adventure Non-fiction Comics about cartoons			Peter
Goosebumps Harry potter Mouseday	Cars, trains, football	Fact books Non-fiction/ Fiction	Funday times	Confuses terminology fiction/nonfi	Jed
Very Hungry Caterpillar World of Animal		cartoon	Dandy Denis the Menace	Oxford Reading Tree Dark green books or light green	Dennis
Greedy Boy Gruffaloe	The world "about where eels live and water skippers"	magazine	Denis the Menace		Percy

Boys with incomplete data on attitudinal scores

	Cowboy Pirates A gorilla one	Pop-up books Information comics			Darren
Charlie and the chocolate Factory Jungle book		Cartoon magazine			Darryl
Lady and the tramp Peter Pan Dalmations Little Mermaid Dumbo Biff & Chip	Animal books	Non-fiction comics			Joel

Appendix 8

Section A

Coding structure derived with QSR Nud*ist software. Figures refer to numerical coding of nodes for Reception class children. Missing nodes are the result of coding revision during analysis. An almost identical structure was obtained in coding parents of the Nursery class group

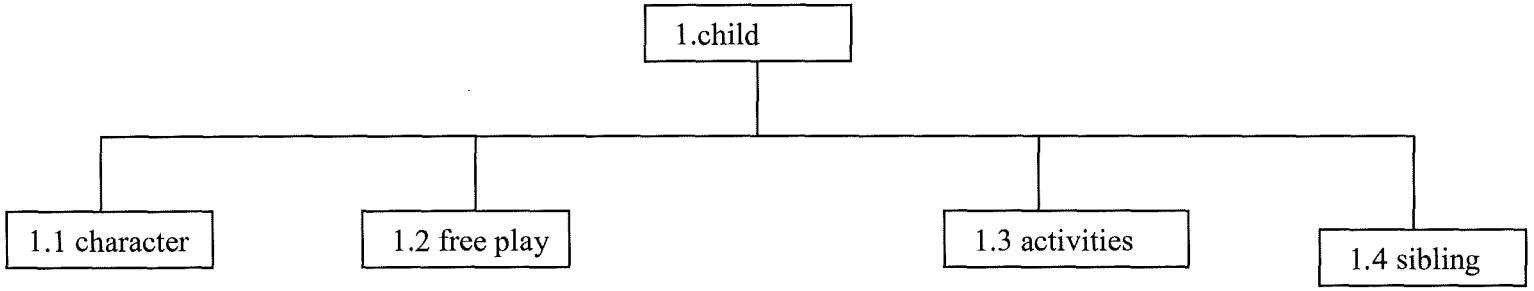


Figure A.8.1

Code definition:

1. all data containing reference to their own child
1.1 portrayal of child by parent
1.2 play as described by parent
1.3 activities organised for child by parent
1.4 nature of sibling relationship/comparison with siblings

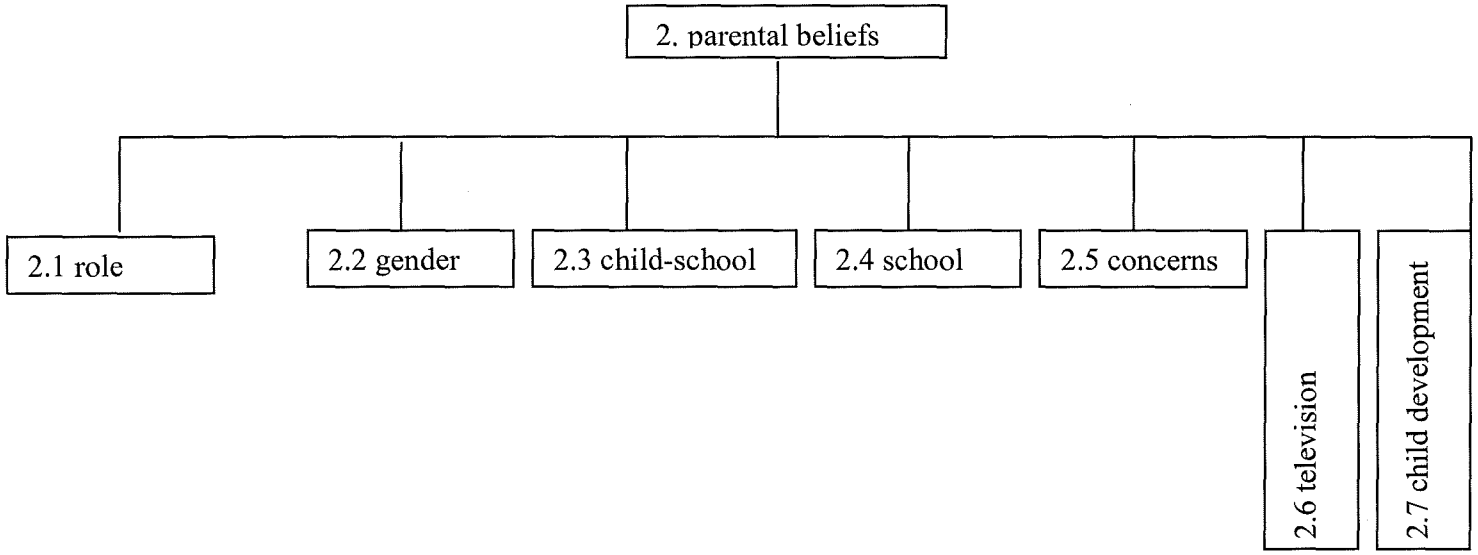


Figure A.8.2

Code definition:

2. Parental beliefs about a range of issues relating to the early years
2.1 How parents describe own role in relation to child's development/day to day activities
2.2 Parental beliefs relating to gender of child
2.3 Parental perspective of how child fits into 'school' environment
2.4 Parental beliefs about early schooling
2.5 Parental concerns expressed about child prior to statutory age of school
2.6 Parents views about television
2.7 Issues of importance to parent in terms of child's growth and development/reflections on how child is raised

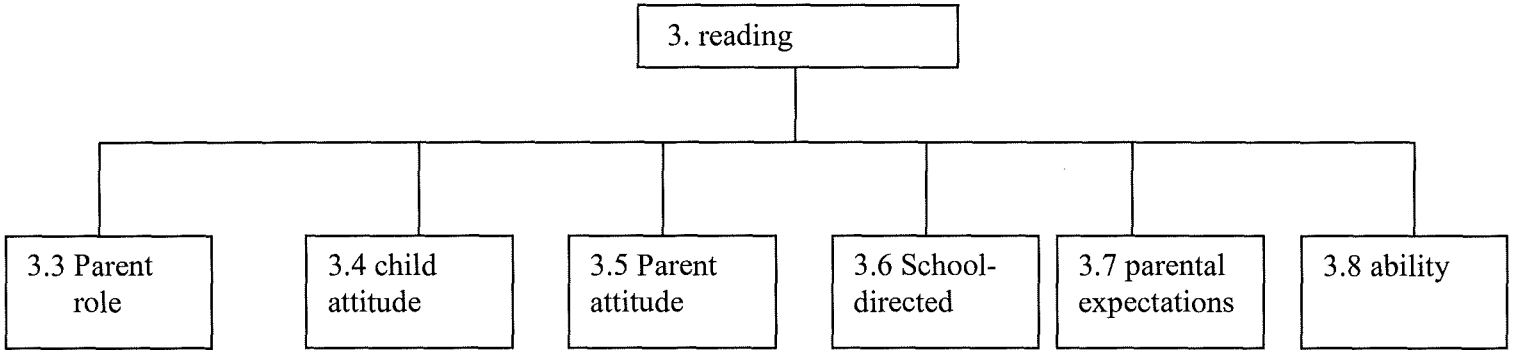


Figure A.8.3

Code definition:
3. Child's reading habits and interests
3.3 How the parent is involved in home reading
3.4 Attitude if child toward reading as seen by parent
3.5 Parental view of reading in general and of their own child's reading
3.6 Comments about school-directed reading
3.7 Parents' expectations about their children's reading
3.8 Assessment of own child's ability

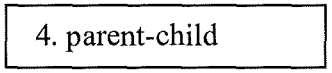


Figure A.8.4

Code definition:
Relationship identified by parent between one or other parent and child

Section B

Summary of parental views illustrated by excerpts from transcripts

child	Parental assessment	Parental view on later entry	Parental views on transition to Year One	Child response to Reception or Nursery	Literacy development as viewed by parent
Darryl	Child is <u>too young</u>. Poor home behaviour attributed to <u>tiredeness</u> <u>Imposition of conformity:</u> school viewed as restrictive No resistance to school "never cried going or anything Concentration, listening in class is acknowledged as not easy " everyone has one thing in their report and his was just to concentrate a little bit more and listen to the teacher.. And he's being fine".	Later entry no harm Ambivalent attitude to school. No criticism of school per se but aware of age-inappropriate demands	Viewed Year 1 as his first year and what came before as somewhat irrelevant. No real problems with transition	Became very tired Behaviour at home deteriorated "shouts and grumbles and fights with his brothers and two sisters" "go off and get a pen and write all over the wall....destructive things" "he gets quite frustrated, he gets very very tired" Has a positive attitude to going in to school, "very outspoken"	Poor writing skills "pen to paper he's <u>not as good yet</u>" "<u>he needs a bit of help</u> with his writing and his colouring" Reading is seen mainly as a school activity. Books used to find out information but will only do a limited amount "but he's more interested in school books, I'd say because he tries to read those."

Frank	Child is too young "he struggles being the youngest" "he's just terrible young I have to say" Tiredeness No resistance to school "He enjoys it, he never says he doesn't want to go and he talks about school in a positive way" Concentration is a problem, "he doesn't really want to listen and concentrate" Negative appraisal of his experience: "he is frustrated", Conforming "he walks in sometimes and you can hear him take a deep breath "now this is it and I have to conform" Lack of confidence "he is more self-conscious about saying something"	Yes, definitely, definitely because I think, he was five, he's five and half in Year one so he started in September he was just four and it's too young.	Feels Reception class has knocked some spontaneity out of him. "I was going to say beaten out of him". "He sits and concentrates." "He's very formal" Smooth transition	"tired out.. I think he struggles to behave"	Poor reading skills "I think his reading and writing are behind" "the writing is a real issue for him" Very frightened of making mistakes He is very articulate "He loves books and we have a lot of books in the house"
Joel	School viewed as hard work "mummy we have to do so much work" Conforming He wasn't allowed to get up and run around" "He had to get used to sitting still" "he's fine now, he's used to it"	Against later entry - "No, I'm happy he went in now I think the longer you would have left it maybe the worse, because he would have got more used to you know and he is getting bigger now. I am glad he went when he did."	Smooth transition Reception term was hard but he settled quickly into Year one after summer holidays	Transient resistance (only one term of Reception "He thinks he's one of the biggest ones now. He's been fine since he went back."	No comments as to standard just as a task which needs doing with him each day. Neutral stance of child. Reading is homework. Loves to listen to stories

Amit	Ready for school "he was already writing before he went to school" "he knew all of the basics" eg alphabet School more of a challenge "I think he was getting a little bit bored" (ie. In playgroup) Needed structure, to "sit down and learn". This was not provided at playgroup although he was better of once a week at playgroup plus where there was more structure. Acknowledged that other children are not ready at the same stage.	"He was definitely ready. Playgroup wasn't quite enough for him" Had one term of R. but could safely have gone a term earlier	Smooth transition Views Year one as beginning of hard work, "if he can't get it now he is going to get left behind". "he's got to really get on with it now because he'll be pushed". Has responded well to the beginning	Coping very adequately " No he's not said he's not coping with anything" "He didn't have to do lots to keep up with everybody else"	No concerns expressed. Coping with all the "work" very easily
Alex	Age of child acknowledged as a problem "he started school at just four and a half and he was beside himself coming out of school" "he's been exhausted". Felt Nursery was not satisfactory for child but at the same time school in R was hard. "It's really hard. Nobody tells you that you know" Fidgety. School restrictive physically "He's sort of found it harder where he's had a free reign really"(previously) Lack of self-confidence, convinced that he can't do things. Mum blames herself for that, feels she has underestimated him. School have higher expectations to which he has responded. Mum believes peer pressure to conform has helped him	Ambivalent: Felt that Nursery and or Reception should be quite highly structured. "Reception is more what I thought Nursery would be". In spite of child's adverse response does not suggest a later entry would have been beneficial. In fact would have liked a once a year entry although recognises he could not have coped with full-time school in September "He couldn't have handled it, no way" Believed as part of January intake "he's at a disadvantage"	Year one much harder. "Year one is going to be much tougher". Reception is the stepping stone. Year one will bring more pressure, different subjects introduced. "It's going to be hard"	Exhaustion Class has had a "rough time" Does not resist going to school. No mention of enjoyment, "it's not so bad". Found it hard to sit still; this has improved in the holidays. Acute problems after school, "he was beside himself"	"I'd have to persuade him to read a book" but is happy to be read to. Mother satisfied that he is doing fine compared to other children.. Has timetabled half an hour a day work during holidays in which he has completed a Letterland book and other activity books. Operates a reward system.

Charles	Very happy to go Tired but school is not demanding. Would have progressed much further in Ireland even though school starts later.	Age of entry not an issue. Class size main concern.	Higher expectations of year 1. Will assess whether child needs tutor	Finds it "hard" because he is quiet Tired	No reference to not coping. Does regular work at home with his mum. Loves stories to be read to him.
Harry	School highly demanding Parental recognition of negative attitude to school and problem of pressure on child. "He doesn't like school, the work is too hard, he doesn't like school." " I think there's a lot of pressure there too though, personally,I think he's under pressure at school" Overwhelmed by size of class; reluctant to speak up Resistant to reading and writing. "I'll only read two pages", "You read it, I'm not reading Tired Father feels satisfied with academic progress. Mum has reservations about the pressure it entails.	In favour of an early introduction to reading, writing, maths. Father has clear criteria : hierarchy of academic skills. "My view is Nursery would not have been stretching enough for him, given the level he was at at the Nursery anyway" . "The school environment has been possibly too stretching".	Viewed as significant change, "they're in for quite a big shock" Child already concerned about spellings "Yes I think there's a worry. He's worried" "You lose a lot of play activities Mother: all that goes straight out the window and its "we're going to work now"," "you've had your year of playing. And I mean he thought last year was hard, so I think he's going to find this year.." Father more confident than mother that he will cope	Tries not to think about school, "he wants to leave it behind" Doesn't like it, is worried and overwhelmed. Finds work hard. Very tired when he comes in. Can't ask teacher for help	Needs help in reading "I do feel he does need a little bit of help". Reluctant to write or read although parents feel he is beginning to change, "his writing isn't too bad". Nevertheless shows an interest in books. Likes to be read to.
Jonathan	Unhappy experience of Reception class. Parental expectation, "to enjoy it more than anything" was disappointed. "When he didn't it was a bit upsetting" No play, "I thought there would be quite a bit more play""It seems to be harder than I remember". Not a difficult level or anything, just a lot of it".	No doubt would have started him later if possible. "You know he has learned from Reception but it's how much more he'll learn this year, isn't it?"	Beginning of Year 1 saw an improvement:"He's made new friends. He doesn't love school the way he loved nursery and playgroup but it's o.k.	Child worried about his work. "He was very frightened, he was very frightened, he'd been crying in school because the teacher had said any boy that doesn't finish their work is going outside the headteacher's office and he was really upset by that." Reluctant to read books sent home from school although generally very interested in books, "I don't want to do this now"	Very satisfied with his progress. Enjoys listening to a wide variety of stories and reads to himself quite happily

Michael	Felt that her own child was ready for Reception but that this was not the case for other children. Before going to reception he was "bored stiff in the mornings no matter what we did". Mixed feeling about the work done but felt that it had allowed child to fly ahead with his reading. Thought it was a suitable environment for her son whom she viewed as "bright".	Ambivalent. While she felt that it was the right thing for her own son, thought that the demands were too much on a lot of children who were not quite so quick. Not in favour of pushing children "We've never pushed him to read, we've never pushed him to write, never pushed him to do anything"	No problems foreseen and none experienced. Managed all aspects except maths with ease. Reading had been well mastered in Reception class and he was well ahead of his peers.	"He likes school", has same friends that he had in the Nursery. Is not very confident in school but has had a good report. At first he found there was too much work and that the teacher shouted a lot. Quoted child as saying "I don't want to do hard work, I want to play". "The teacher shouts and I have to sit and do my work". He did adapt after a while (a month?)	Speaks very highly of his academic progress, especially his reading. "The reading side, he just flew off with that". Was a very motivated child long before he went to school
Jed	Ambivalent General feeling that class not structured enough although pleased with reading development. "In literacy they're very good, they've brought him on". Emphasis should have been "less on play and more on sitting down". "I think he was ready to start learning, definitely from an educational point of view..but he's never been a great social being" "he's found it difficult to mix with other children." Recognises but regrets that teacher has not got time for much one-to-one. Feels could have progressed further with this input.	"He should have waited till he was five to start school, definitely"	Sees Year One as a gradual transition in which children will be expected to concentrate for longer pieces of time. Less play although still some as "it's a learning experience in itself" No concerns expressed.	No feedback from child. Mother reticent about his experience. While not unhappy child did not seem quite ready for it. Not a good socialiser "he's found it difficult to mix with other children". Not quite mature enough for the academic demands. Day dreamed a lot of the time in class, simply not doing the work set by teacher. Lacking the concentration to work independently without close supervision	Reading good but disappointed with his writing. Felt he could be doing better. Very positive attitude to reading and books. "He does like reading". Had always had an interest in books and had started to read even prior to going to school.

William	Slight annoyance with Reception class Felt there was no room for individuality. "We weren't supported. I think he just floundered really". Had thrived better in his previous Montessori. Ambivalent about the value of reception class. Unsure what he gained. "First and foremost I wanted him to learn to read" Although he could in fact already read she wanted him "stretched and challenged". This did not seem to happen. Too large a group, many with special needs. Recognised that he was very tired after school.	Felt a once a year intake in September would have been preferable. Did not seem concerned about the demands of reception class but by the problems of settling in. Did not refer to the value of a later start.	No problems foreseen in relation to transition to Year One as mostly had resolved during the course of Reception.	Did not comment much about it but reluctant to do reading tasks set by school.. "he really didn't want to do them. He'd got to". This also settled in the course of time.	Felt he was reading quite well for his age when he began Reception class but worried that he was guessing a lot of words. Felt that problems might evolve because his foundations were not solid. She attributed responsibility for this to the child, the school and themselves.
Arnold	Child did not experience any problems Was quite happy to be at school although found day a bit long to begin with. Unclear what value she assigned to the Reception class in terms of work as he seemed to have forgotten all the reading he had covered in Reception by the beginning of first term in Yr 1.	Seemed in favour of an early beginning. Would have favoured an introduction to literacy in Nursery prior to Reception. "I thought he needed to start learning he was getting bored at home"	Main problem experienced was in his reading having forgotten even the simplest words learned the previous term..	Quite happy being at school but found the work difficult. They were expected to finish work and " it took him a long time before he was actually able to sit down and finish something on his own. problems we had with him. "He'd get bored quite easily, not so much bored but I think he would get put off quickly if he couldn't understand what he was doing or he found it a bit hard he'd say well I don't want to do that anymore. He would try, he found it quite hard to have to do that." Even when he settled into the routine of having to finish work he was often not interested."	Not very satisfied with his progress in reading. "He seems to have forgotten all his reading from last term". He doesn't like to sit down for too long. Prefers to be running around. Quite interested in looking at books but only for short periods.

Arthur	Very mixed feelings. After a very formal Nursery feels the school is not fulfilling his needs academically. "I suppose you want their potential to be achieved and I would say it is not being". "I don't think his full potential is coming out by any means". However, has gradually revised her views as a result of school. who put across the message "learning is about having fun". Does not feel they do much work. Had significantly less freedom in his Nursery. However, is delighted in the keen interest he is showing in the topics that are raised at school.	Very ambivalent. Does not feel he has gained much at all by an early start in formal literacy. Now in Year One he is really reading. At the time felt structure was very important for him and that Reception was not structured enough. This suggests that she would not have approved an even later start although recognises his very early literacy development in Nursery has not been useful.	No problems cited as main problems associated with going from a formal nursery to a Reception class	"I secretly think he loved West Lodge. I think it's a ball in comparison". Loved social aspect of school and developed friendships across years because of sporting talent. However, resisted some reading tasks. Found them difficult. Mother felt it was a left-over from Nursery and partly her own responsibility. Resisted school advice to begin with but gradually developed a more relaxed approach to the task. Greater focus on illustrations etc. Reading becomes a struggle if the text is too difficult.	Happy with his progress " I mean he's now bringing books home from school Year 1 that he had pre-school but I must say he is reading them very well now". Happy with a well-rounded child. Re. Reading dev. "I am not worried about it at all"
Benjamin	Has not given thought to her own expectations of reception class. Is happy so long as he is happy. Academic development is priority, objective:"I suppose that he can form his letters read".	Satisfied that he began reception at four. Nursery was all play. It didn't matter that he didn't know his letters at three but this became important at four	No problems foreseen	Well settled "He's happy there". Needed extra help with writing. He felt he was behind, the only one who couldn't write his name. Long day did make him very tired but no particular problems mentioned	Satisfied he knows all his letters and letter sounds. Very keen to do the reading that is sent home and to listen to stories. Mum not happy with school methods, thought children were relying too much on memory in their reading. Felt he was behind on his writing at the very beginning of reception. Worked with him a lot on his writing "he had a problem with his writing so I spent a lot of time with him".

Gabriel	On the whole quite satisfied "I like what they do" but expressed certain reservations" Felt that school had not done enough for him. "I would have liked to see a lot more welcome for him". "I would have liked to have seen a lot more interest taken in the little ones". In terms of literacy development also expected more. Felt he would have struggled less had he been given more attention at the beginning. School ignored younger element of intake. "It was almost like they were segregated". Felt he should have had more "persuasion and coaching" in September. Felt he was "held back".	Against Re spending longer in a nursery: "No, no, definitely not. He was ready for big school definitely". No very clear reasons expressed why. "He feels he's one of the boys. That's the impression I got".	No concerns expressed. He knows the environment. Transition will be smooth.	Found move into Reception quite hard. But settled well socially. Struggled with the work.	Finds it difficult but is "doing well". Found dev. Of letter recognition difficult. Mother has no concerns. Work takes him a long time but he wants to do well and tries hard. Happy to look at books and read odd words that he recognises.
Adam	Very happy with Reception. to ease him gently into school environment. "I have been very happy". "He's coped brilliantly". Teachers gentle. Main purpose development of social skills. Play important. Felt he was ready for full day. "He wanted to start doing things like big children" Negative aspects mentioned: exhaustion, curtailment of after school activities Did not keep up easily with work and given extra help which mum was pleased with.	Happy with system as it was happy for him not to go into full time school and be given extra support in work where necessary.	Recognises that it will be more tiring and stressful. Less play but is confident in school and in her child. "He takes everything in his stride".	Very happily settled but resistance to reading books from school for the first couple of terms. Even now has to fin a time when he is not too tired which is hard during the week. Quite a lot of reference to how tired he is after school but this is accepted as quite natural.	Felt very happy with his development. "he's done very well". "I prefer people to say he needs a bit of help while they're young". Not ambitious. Against putting pressure on children to learn to read. However, he was getting extra help in school with his sounds, colours etc.

Ricki	Quite happy: was keen for him to start a more formal environment. Felt Reception offered enough range of activities. Believes he was quite happy but seemed constantly worried that he was behind his peers. Would have liked a bit more feedback from school.	Against. Was already anxious in nursery that he needed more formal input. Felt he was "ready to learn more" to do "proper work".	Has found the work hard but continues to enjoy school. Feels they are doing a lot more work. Mother pleased with the change. No concerns.	Was quite happy to go to school although always a "clingy" child. "he's never had any problems with school". Found it hard to sit still. "He used to get quite concerned when he was sitting doing prayers and things". Found reading/writing quite hard. "He found it quite a struggle"	Felt he was behind in Reception class. "We always though he was a little bit behind". Now "seems fine". Has a positive attitude towards his reading. "He likes to read especially his school books that he brings home". Sometimes too tired to do his reading after school.
Henry	Very satisfied. "I'd recommend it to anyone". "He's taken the whole thing in his stride". Felt it was important to start learning young as so much was expected from with the SATS. He made tremendous progress with his reading.	Happy with the system as it is. (in this case part time reception for two terms). "They have to start now to get it in".. "I don't think it harms to learn"	Found it hard. Books longer and more demanding which mother thought was unnecessary. Was less motivated to finish his book. "it gets him down". Child less positive abut school: "I'm not sure about school mum"	Very happy. Settled well and made friends. Progressed very well with his reading	Felt he did very well with it in Reception class. Much praise for the teacher who gets them all reading. Now in YR 1s beginning to struggle a bit and less willing to do his reading after school. No general interest in books which he had when younger. Just prior to Reception "He likes books, Callum, he really does," . A year later when interviewed, no general interest in books. Did not look at any books they brought away on holiday with them.
Jim	Very happy "I'd recommend it to anyone". Did not feel there would be a major change from nursery to reception. Settled well. Loved playing with his friends. In early days his attention span was short and he could not be persuaded to do thing he didn't want to do. This passed quickly.	Did not suggest a need for later entry.	No problems raised	Positive	Reading very well., is an independent reader and mum is pleased that he is still progressing.

Richard	Satisfied with school. "So far it's been a good experience." Anxous about him but "he seemed to have settled". Expected him to be reading by the end of the year. But at the same time would have liked him to have started later. Has not experienced major problems although he's not a "rough and tumble" boy. Felt he was behind the children who started in September.	Very much in favour of later entry. "I would have given anything for him to have started school in September" (Ie"after 5th bi"hday) "it would have given him time just to develop that little bit more and he would have had more time to play and interact with other children"	Believes it will be difficult. He will only have had 6 months of school and a six week break during which "the forget half the stuff they are taught" Worried he will be behind children who started earlier. Feels he might extra help.	No major problems experienced. Child does not relate much about school. "He seems to have settled".	He is learning very fast and is very satisfied with his progress. Brings a new letter home every day. Would expect him to be reading by the end of Reception. "I think he is doing really well". At the same time was considering giving him extra tuition but was advised against until year 1." Felt he had some catching up to do with those who had been in school longer but not really behind in terms of his age. Seems to enjoy books.
Percy	Not happy with Reception class system although satisfied that the particular Reception is doing quite well within the limitations. "It was rather a forced choice. Key issues: recognition individual interests and stages, social development. Environment has had certain detrimental effects. Struggle with demands has led to deterioration in home behaviour. Peer pressure not to play with girls. "I think it has been quite a strain and a struggle for him".	Would have preferred more time in nursery. Felt it was less pressurised. Better ratio, more time for children to talk to teachers. Reception has had some adverse effects, especially on his behaviour. Academically nursery was just as challenging but in a more relaxed atmosphere.	No worries expressed about transition but felt it was important that friendships had been established prior to beginning in Year 1.	Not easy. Demand to work more independently, "he has found that difficult". Also had problems socially. School was " a struggle and a strain"	Not concerned about his academic progress so much as his motivation. Has always been very interested in books. Have encouraged some structured work with him recently with school's support. Has been willing to do this but would not push it.

Kenny	Wanted Reception to give children more independence away from home. "To get them used to be in a formal setting, used to taking instructions and orders from somebody other than their parents". Nursery had many features of home. Mother looking for a reception which would take them away from "home scene atmosphere" but recognised they would and did find it difficult Expectations of school and mother about children incongruent. "I think they are a little too young". Mother not in a rush. School expressed concern while mother saw it as part of their developmental process. No academic expectations. Felt reading, writing etc. could wait until Year One. An introduction to formal work so that it will not come as "such a shock" . Reception makes them very tired which" creates a lot of tension"	Felt the children were too young for a lot of what they were getting but at the same time felt it was a better preparation for Year One to be in the school environment. Working within the system but not in favour of early start to formal work. Pragmatic and realistic about own children.	Felt that Reception class was a good preparation. This was one of main reasons for putting them in a reception.	Both twins found reception hard. Mother realised they would find it difficult but both were keen to go. "Within a week they hated it". One twin resented his "freedom" being "curtailed", the other found it "an alien environment", Everything seemed very big. "they had to fend for themselves" which they were not used to. Began to settle by the third term	Both boys are behind although school says they are doing well. "They are beginning to pick it up but they are not ready". Mother much more realistic and relaxed about their literacy development. Main concern for her is that they learn to love reading. "I feel that what is most important is to make sure that they enjoy and are interested". Has a wide approach to literacy development, encouraging them to make up stories, to look at pictures, listen to tapes. Is not concerned about the mechanics of reading at this stage.

Martin	Reception class has had a detrimental effect on his behaviour. "His aggression I think comes form mixing with his friends" Main anxiety about his behaviour. Feels also that class is too big for him to learn properly. Wants to give private tuition. "Some kids might not need it, they're just geniuses, but I think my son would". Has an uneasy relationship with teachers. Resents their criticism but says they are "lovely". They want greater input from her and she is unable to give this, feels poorly much of the time. School also has failed to take into account his multi-lingual background.	Ambivalent. Is aware that children in Sweden begin later "at least my kids knows more than the Swedish ones". Talks about the importance of a broad education "I want them more to have a bigger wider view, art, play and I say there is time for education". At the same time does not talk about nursery in a positive way. "Nursery is only toys. He couldn't do anything in nursery"	Is very concerned about present situation . Year One is not an issue at present.	Has become very aggressive since being in reception. Also had a period of wetting his bed. Struggles with his work. He knows he is behind the others. Mixes with other children but in an aggressive way, often kicking them.	Mother feels he is behind and attributes this to the number of languages he is exposed to at home. " I think that is why he is still behind". "Maybe now he's slower but when he is a bit older I am sure I want him to catch up."
Brian	Happy with reception class experience. Settled quickly and managed quite easily with academic demands. Mother felt he found it difficult to concentrate at times.	Felt he was ready for school. "If I made him wait another year it would be wrong". Felt it was important to begin learning to read and write.			Pleased with his progress.

Matthew	Concerned about move to reception prior to child starting. Child very miserable about full time school These younger ones are being pushed in too quick". This feeling is shared by other mothers of children in the class. Aware that is may suit some but others need to still be playing. "if you've got one that'd rather play than do the work then obviously you are disrupting their way of life. "he' s taken a long time to adjust to reading" Does not like to sit down, "he's a live wire". Poor sleeper, cannot shut down from school. "He gets very over-tired"Developing negative attitude to work He can't be bothered with more work, simply wants to get it out of the way". Teacher time restricted. Loss of confidence and motivation in child. Peer pressure.	Against pushing children so early. Concerned prior to entry to reception, worried about all aspects. Child not developmentally ready. However felt he needed the "discipline" although he would find it hard. Feels children all catch up in the end. Has had several children herself. I've never had any problems when they are older the ones that haven't started quick".	At time of interview similar problems carried over from reception	"Miserable" although did mix socially even with older children. Became very over tired, unable to switch off from school work. Lost confidence in his own ability to read as saw others doing it better. Angry about not being allowed to play when he wants to. Homework done so as to get it out of the way.	Struggling with his reading. Cannot manage 'sight' words such as "you". Aware that he found it difficult to sit down. Not concerned long term but slight friction with school demands which did not take into account child's stage. Prepare to spend a certain amount of time with child but felt there was no point pushing him against his will at this stage. Understood child's own needs well and not willing to impose external demands on him to too great a degree.
Graham	Ambivalent Child grew in confidence"he has come out of himself" but remained quite clingy and reluctant to go. In particular did not like assemblies held for mass. Mum felt it was not quite right that child saw school as a place to play. Too much play and not enough demand to concentrate. At the same time felt that child was still very young.	In favour of an early start. Believed that he needed to learn to work. Favoured even a nursery which was "more sitting down and actually achieving something". Liked to see wroksheets etc coming home.	Very happy. Smooth transition and sudden progress in child	Not particularly happy although no major problems. Setlled "quite well". Remained quite clingy and resisted reading-related activities. Found mass/assemblies overwhelming. Improvement in last half term of reception	Found reading quite hard. Struggled with letter formation and alphabet. Felt pleased with recent progress, especially since beginning year one. Much more positive toward reading activities now. Parents used "a lot of encouragement and a bit of bribery".

Hideo	No complaints about reception but not very aware of details. Did not think there was anything he really struggled with at school. and settled quite quickly.	Would have preferred him to go to reception class later but all his friends were going at the same time and didn't want him to loose out on something. Concerned whether he would "take to it"		Not much information as interviewed early. Appears to have settled reasonably well and not struggled too much with any aspect of schooling	Satisfied with progress
Jack	Very settled , happy to go there in the morning Provided a good place to develop social skills & to learn to follow instructions. Reading and writing not an important priority, they were "still very young". Nursery met the needs of her child well. Tired after half a day's Nursery. Needs a period in front of the to recharge	Very positive toward nursery. No need to introduce school earlier.	Feels he will start to work as this is what is expected by school. Unable to work much with him up to now as resistant. No concerns expressed re transition	Very happy to go	Not interested in books or in writing. Loves to draw, painting, play do.
Eric	Very happy "there were mornings he couldn't wait to go". Not enough challenge "I think they could have done a bit more" however staff described as "wonderful". "I think Edward found it a little bit boring". "He didn't try very hard", "He needed a bit more". Tired after half a day, needs half an hour to recharge "But I really and truly felt that Edward just sat back all the time he was there. He needs to be, not pushed but certainly '"right we're doing this'"	No direct reference to beginning school earlier but implication that nursery was not offering enough. However, very happy with staff and set-up	Aware of increased demands but does not think he will have difficulties.	Very happy to go No problems cited	"he'd rather build and play with things than sit down and actually colour and draw" "his concentration span was very very short" "I don't really know how he is doing" "He'll listen to anybody read a story but as for picking up a book himself, no not really, he's not too keen"

Damion	Has a very full schedule outside of Nursery, sport, friends, time with both parents, siblings. Very positive toward N. "No they're very good at the nursery" Seen as partnership but mum still has the main role. "I'm with him all day every day" Nursery is an "extension of the home" "Just to encourage him in the things he likes to do" "It's not just the learning process it's the mixing as well". "To help him prepare for the Infant school" Nursery seems to meet mum's child-centred expectations	No reference to starting earlier. Acknowledges child's age, does not expect him to concentrate for great lengths of time. Very positive about Nursery.	No concerns expressed about transition. Aware that he misses Reception but feels she has compensated with activities at home	Very happily settled. Generally a "Laid back child" No problems encountered in Nursery	Happy to sit and do activities with pen and paper. Also has a good memory."He likes, Jack did his SATS this year and he, while Jack was sitting and we were going through the English tests, Sam sat and did some number work, he likes sums and just simple, two and three and he'll count things and he likes sitting down with a pen and paper and you know drawing, does drawing and things." . "He likes reading, we try and sit and read a book a s often as we can. I mean there are letters that he recognises, obviously words he doesn't know very well yet"
Dominic	Very happy, "at the moment he just skips in like a little lamb" "Lovely, fantastic, the teachers were excellent" "The school is fantastic" "The teachers are approachable, I don't see any problems there"	In favour of earlier entry but very supportive of the school "less PE and a bit more reading" "I would have preferred him to be in school from four because I think he would have had more compact learning in the Nursery section" "It's my own personal view that I would have preferred him to be in main stream from the age of four"	Diminished playtime but will have to cope with it. Probably hard work. Teacher will make transition as easy as possible for them.	Very happy. No problems even though mum described him as a shy boy.	Mother's expectations not being met by school but she is prepared to wait for school to take the lead. "He's five and he doesn't write much at all" "He doesn't show a great deal of interest at the moment. As I've said they don't push it" (literacy skills) Loves to listen to stories "He loves me reading to him, he loves anybody reading to him" Physically very active child who loves to do "boyish" activities. This has been well supported by mum. "But he only does the letters he doesn't put them all together as a word" Early word recognition: " he managed to pick out letters which he managed to make into short words without me realising" "So he is actually reading wherever we go"

Tim	Well settled. No problems raised. Is active when he comes back from school, (tv does not go on automatically). Equal weight given to social and academic skills. Expectations very limited and vague "the basics". This is includes the alphabet, number skills, "getting him ready to read."	Expressed a desire for earlier start. Has friend in different LEA who began school a year earlier." I think they do loose out the summer born children, don't they?" "Well I think it would have done, it would have been more beneficial for him. Yes." (ie earlier start)	Not worried about her child but about school's difficulties in coping with children at different stages, "I don't know quite how they cope with that"	No problems mentioned. Positively engaged in a broad range of activities	Self-motivation to learn coming form child "He will try and repeat things now" "There are other times during the day when he'll, he'll get a book himself, he'll help himself" "He's definitely sort of come along in the last few months" "He can write his name sort of very well" "He's coming along quite well" "I'm quite happy"
Bruno	Well settled, no problems raised. Since beginning full time Nursery get a bit tired however still very active at end of day. School has motivated hi m toward an interest in literacy School focused on social aspects first "then to follow on with starting to introduce them to reading and writing and education ready for them to go to main school" Nursery environment "very caring" "sort of replacement mother really to a certain extent"	Not in favour of earlier start although acknowledges that she used to be. Has read about advantages of starting later but has also had experience with own son. "Now he is ready about this age and he's interested"	Worried about how child with cope with other children being more advanced than him.. Main fear "competition with other children". "I'm not worried as long as he reaches his potential"	Well settled, no problems reported	Has developed independence in sitting with pencil and paper at a desk. Knows letters and sounds "He'll refer to the reference book" "He'll pick things out of books and draw a picture"
Rowan	Well settled, has provided a good environment for him to develop social skills "learning to cooperate" "sharing" "listening to the teachers". Literacy not a high priority	Not in favour of pushing children young. "I can see he needs it now" Felt she damaged her elder son.	Main problem seen as whole day. "He'll learn to get on with it" "That's the system" "He'll be very tired, there'll be lots of comings and goings"	Well settled in Nursery, no problems raised	Makes no mention has to how she views his progress but does talk about reading with him regularly and doing his letters. No concern expressed as to his standard
Alan	Happy experience, always keen to go. Half day insufficient, " I think he does need them extra hours. He needs that time to sit down rather than be allowed to run round in the playground playing with his friends." "I think he needs to sit down and learn to be quiet doesn't he?"	Keen on earlier start to school, "the last couple of terms he seemed to stop work and couldn't be bothered"	Did not foresee any problems	Always keen to go	No concerns expressed about his ability. Very keen to do his school work but shows no interest in reading in general. "He's a bright boy" "he hasn't got the concentration for sitting down and doing something". "I think he's doing actually better than my daughter"

Saul	Happy experience. Nursery provided a range of activities which were very satisfactory. Opportunities "I'd like them to be doing activities which they wouldn't normally be able to do at home". "They do have the choice of an enormous range of activities" Gives grounding in literacy Skills for learning "It gives him a good educational start" Develop skills for learning "They concentrate and they get the children to participate, bring in items" Social skills "Well it gets the children used to their peers so that they're self-confident to do things." Stimulation	A later entry is to the child's advantage. Concentration is normally not sufficiently developed to cope with formal school. "Most children I don't think are ready. Their concentration span is so short at that age that I don't think that you can have formal teaching"	Although aware of differences between children who have had two terms of Reception and those who have not, is fairly certain that child will cope. He is self-motivated and has always shown an interest in words and books, " he's been writing and looking at words and numbers since he was about 18 months".	Positive. No concerns expressed at all	Felt he was doing well. Tries to read himself. Has always asked a lot of questions "how do you spell..." Joins in with brothers homework. "He's been writing and looking at words and numbers since he was about 18 months"
Dennis	Identidied certain problems but "they've done a very good job. Don't get me wrong". Size of class Lack of structure: "too much play and not enough constructive work with him". In spite of extra term "he's not better for it at all". However in favour of Nursery education, "I think they need the Nursery before they go to school"	Ambivalent: "They're only little, still babies really" "It's too much for them"	I am very concerned about him going up and doing full time. Was expecting tantrums but when interviewed child had only just started in Year 1.	No real problems in Nursery although seemed to be a bit of a loner. Lost some of his enthusiasm for learning to read but unclear why.	Concern about his progress, "I would have thought he would have been a lot better than he was". "He's not reading very much". Behind his sister at the same stage. Mum acknowledges the role of gender in this development. In his writing she would have expected a little bit more than he is actually doing, "I mean he's writing his name, he scribbles down and he thinks he is writing sentences". Slight disappointment in the stage he has reached even though given re-assurance by teacher.

Jeffrey	Very satisfied with Nursery. No reservtions "I think it's lovely" Social skills "I think it's very important for them to be able to socialise with other children" "Learning to react with other children and with other adults, with the teachers too."	No suggestion made that an earlier start would have been beneficial. Everything seems to be on course as it is.	Had expected he might have problems sitting down and concentrating on his work. However had a very positive response. Was enjoying the learning	Enjoyable experience	He seems to be working quite well. "He enjoys doing his letters and practising" No concerns as to his level
Lawrence	Very satisfied with Nursery Had no clear expectations, "showing the arts and crafts and how to play nicely" "doing some reading and writing" "I think they are fantastic there, really fantastic". Appreciated the warmth of the staff particularly.	Felt no rush to get them into school. "He's five, he's a baby I think" "Nothing holds their attention for long this age"	None expressed	Very happily settled	"He's a star, he really is, he's done really well" No specific details about what the child can or can't do.
Darren	Very satisfied with nursery Placed emphasis on acquisition of literacy skills. "Sometimes they don't get on to the words and he had so that was good". Is satisfied with other aspects of Nursery such as learning to sit and listen, follow instructions, work in a group	Expressed a desire for a transition period but not for later entry. Is quite satisfied that Nursery is doing everything it should be and allows them to take the lead. Does not seem to think it necessary to push them further.	Did not like the idea that child would not get a Reception class although acknowledged that it had not really benefited her older boy. Had hoped that child's group would be taught separately for a while. This did not happen as there were too many children. However her fears were not realised. "I thought in a way that he was going to get thrown in at the deep end and he was going to get dropped on the floor" "I was a bit worried about that but he seems to have got on all right"	Very happy in school. Responded very well to Nursery and settled easily into Year one. "He enjoys it. Everything he's been asked to do"	"But I mean, I mean he's pretty good at everything he does anyway". Sometimes get cross if he struggles with learning a new word, "at the moment his reading books are getting a bit harder and he gets in a right strop" "other than that he loves it. He loves school, he's really enjoying himself. I think he enjoys learning".

Terry	Ambivalent attitude " I don't think I am disappointed with anything""I'm perfectly happy but". Feels that more structure would have benefited her child. Felt he had a good beginning with Montessori and then found Nursery too free, needed to be told what to do. Reading slowed down. However, acknowledged that older son had struggled with full time in reception. Willing to be directed by school in terms of academic demands on children. Main concern seems to be his reading. Did not dwell on other aspects of nursery education.	Was aware of problems associated with early full time school. Felt older son had struggled. In favour of some half way stage	Was very concerned about transition. Felt that the change form part to full time was very demanding and the academic pressures on top of this were too much. Unsure how son would cope. " I mean I know that he'll be fine but it's just daunting to think of him going straight into year1". Felt her other son was "eased" into it more gently. Pressure of work to catch up with those who had had reception., "he's got a lot to cover in the time" "They've got a lot of pressure on at a very young age" Extra time in school is already a "big leap".	No problems raised; quite a neutral description of Nursery dominated by her concern of whether they catered sufficiently for his reading.	Felt he was doing well. Is self-motivated, likes to copy out words and will pick up books and look at them himself. "He's just picking things up". "He reads very well so I don't think I am disappointed with anything". Aware that he found writing difficult but was happy to help him: " I think, just negotiating holding a pencil was quite difficult for him for a while".
Justin	Very happy "He went into Nursery fine, so that was great. He does like there", "He's fighting to get in". Although child has had a happy experience of the Nursery mother is slightly ambivalent about certain aspects. Has very little information, feedback from teachers. Is uncertain about a lot of things, "I've never seen anything that he;s done" and reticent about making judgements but feels he could have done more reading. Felt that was a lack of individual monitoring of children. However, she believes that children learn through play and "it's wonderful that he's got it"	Did not express a desire for an earlier start to school although she would have preferred slightly more structure to the day. View of early education as experience through play and a wide range of activities. This was well catered for in the Nursery.	Is not concerned about the transition as is very confident in her son's ability to cope with difficult situations. Realises that it will be much more structured and talks about the teacher as very "strict" but does forsee problems. "If anyone is going to teach him, she will". If there are any problems she would hold the school very much responsible.	Settled very quickly although had never settled into playgroup prior to Nursery. Has a lot of friends and is always eager to go.	A well motivated child: "reading, writing or anything he will sit and he will do it". Does not show a particular interest in books. "More than his sister but not as much as I'd like"

Oscar	Child always eager to get to school. No problems at all associated with going to Nursery although mum would have liked a greater stress on academic aspects. Her view had changed slightly and was now able to recognise the importance of social aspects of Nursery , playing with other children and sharing things. "to start off with they played a bit too much but I suppose that's the purpose of nursery really rather than teaching them academic things. So later on I changed my view a bit". "So I thought the nursery was pretty good actually in teaching them to do those things."	Slightly ambivalent. She recognised that children needed to play and was unsure at what age they could start to sit down "to study". However, overall seemed to feel an early start was helpful, "I think if they're put into that routine earlier, at a younger age, they would get into it sooner. It would be like a normal routine for them." " But I think it's a good idea to start them fairly young to get into that routine of being able to sit down and to study".	<u>Smooth transition</u> Felt that the full day would be hard for him and that a staggered, more gradual beginning would be better. Was quite confident that he would get used to it. "He should get into it pretty well". Has the view that children are quite adaptable. In questionnaire did no report any problems relating to transition. Settled "very easily"	No problems reported in Nursery	Had mastered his sounds and how to write is name before he went to Nursery. Feels he is doing "ok" although said she would like him to do better
Peter	<u>Very happy with Nursery</u> "They are learning something new every day they are there, even though it 's through play". Could not see any problems areas	Felt a transitional Reception class would have been helpful to get used to full time but not I a hurry in academic terms	Felt that there should be a Reception class before Year 1. Straight into full time school would be hard. However, in relation to own son transition not a problem. Had been prepared in Nursery with early reading and adapted quickly to greater demands of Year 1. For a while talked about work being harder but has now stopped	Very happy. Well settled socially. No problems experienced.	Had made good progress in the nursery. Knew all the letters ("characters") and was "on the books". "He's definitely coming on with his reading as well". Positive about his progress and only regrets her lack of in put.

Dan	Insufficient academic emphasis Felt Nursery was like playgroup and should have come at an earlier stage. Purpose of nursery: to socialise, to learn how to interact with others. Also to learn how to write name and understand the abc. "Nursery as a whole I think is fine but I would have preferred him to start Nursery at an earlier age and for him to have been going to Nursery at the age of 3."	In favour of children commencing formal school earlier. "I think a lot more at his age, a lot more should have been done." Felt son would have benefited with the extra year. "He has completely missed out on what they would teach him in Reception class so he'll now have to work that extra bit hard in order to catch up". " I think the children who do have the benefit of that extra year I think they are much better off".	Child has found it very difficult but hard to say why. Saw the transition as being "thrown in at the deep end". Is very tired and reluctant to go to school most days. "I think a gradual introduction into full time education would have been better". Is unsure whether is having problems with friendships although normally makes friends easily.	No problems encountered in Nursery, "He was fine. It's since he started full time"	Satisfied with his progress but has not had feedback from teacher yet. "he's good with phonic sounds" and shows an interest in books. Nothing to suggest that he is not coping with the work.
Neil	Disappointed in Nursery. " I thought it would be more advanced than what it is". Expectations based on his sister who had come on much further. Worried and surprised that he had not learned his letters. Also expressed disappointment in lack of contact with Nursery. Mother had no real knowledge of how literacy was developed in Nursery. Nursery only spoke of concerns prior to child going into Yr1. Focused on academic purpose of Nursery: "to get ahead before he actually goes full-time" "to start him off with reading and writing". Felt child was bored and needed full-time education.	Against. Felt he was missing out and "I don't think they can ever possibly catch up". Talked a lot about child being bored.	Feels that the work will be a "shock" to him. A sudden change from the Nursery where they are allowed to do more or less what they want. Only short bursts of work with the teacher ever demanded.	No problems raised re: child's response but worried about his academic development. Very short span of concentration which she seemed to put down to the environment while recognising that his sister had done perfectly well in the same environment.	Felt that standard was very poor. Has not learned letters. Interested in listening to stories he "gets frustrated" when trying to read. "he does try". Poor concentration. "he'd much rather be doing something else".

Rob	Very happy with Nursery. Had never given much thought to purpose of Nursery. "Well I don't really know, I've not really thought about it actually, no not at all". Felt it had benefited her son a lot particularly in social terms: less moody, learning to share etc.	Against: would have preferred him to have had full time Reception education earlier. Felt he got bored easily and would have liked him to have more "school work". "But I just feel he would benefit from full time school, definitely". Nevertheless, relaxed about academic progress.	No great concerns although recognises that being at school the whole day will be a shock to they system. Child is looking forward to it.	Very happy and has done him a lot of good. "Even when he's been sick sometimes he's cried because he's wanted to go to Nursery." Has got "a hell of a lot out of it". Has become a less moody child, mixes well with others.	Beginning to develop well. Sees him as a "quite a bright boy" who will learn quickly in Year One. Not concerned about his standard "He's not a brilliant reader yet".
Collin	Very happy with nursery "It's a very good nursery". Gives them a start to their school career. Has started them off with their reading well but gives them the choice of books, not too rigid. Feels he gets bored easily outside school.	Against: Would have preferred him to be in full time education earlier as feels he gets bored and up to mischief outside school. No academic concerns.	No problems foreseen. "He can't wait".	Very happily settled.	Satisfied he's coming on well, "he's very good". Eager to read his book from school when he gets in.
Derrick	Very happy with Nursery: "I'm happy" "It seemed really good". "He gets a lot of social, playing with other children". He's coming on really well.	Does not hold very clear views on educational issues. Only recently realised he was missing out Reception but not very concerned. Possibly could have had a little more but not an important issue for her.	Not concerned, "I think he'll be all right" Feels main change will be staying all day. Is not worried about academic aspect and child is not worried about the change.	Very good. "He loves going to nursery"	Very satisfied: "He's coming on really well, starting to read".
Simon	Very satisfied with Nursery. Saw it as a preparation for school. "interacting with other children" "Making friends" "Getting used to being in a very busy environment". "Play and having fun. Realising that school can be fun" Saw literacy development as a shared responsibility between school and home.	Against. Would have liked him to have a transitional reception class but not to start school any earlier.	Slightly concerned but most of her worries have been allayed. Feels she has covered academic aspect of reception at home .for that. "I'm not really worried, I think he's probably able to manage". Thinks he will find it hard to adjust to demands of full day school, especially the structure.	Very good. He's made friends. "I think he's been very happy there and I think that is the main thing really".	Satisfied that he his reading. Is developing fine. Positive attitude, significant exposure to books. "He learned his letters quite early" Believes that he has done at home much of the type of work that would have been done at school in a reception class.

Jeremy	Very happy. Both parents felt nursery was there to help child interact with other children. "The mixture there is just brilliant. They get to play and there is always education within play". Glad he had time to play before demands of Year 1.No academic concerns.	Felt he was ready to start about a term earlier but recognised that this was a view taken in retrospect. Was beginning to get bored. "he is so bored in the afternoons". Not worried about academic development.	Will take a little time to adapt but is not worried. Child concentrates well. More worried about his getting used to having lunch there etc. Feel he is ready for it already. Child is looking forward to it.	Has always been very happy to go.	Satisfied with his progress. No academic concerns and describes a very positive attitude to reading.
Cameron	Very happy , fulfilled her expectations. "They were getting him learning whereas at home he was just playing". He learned to sit down and concentrate. Also developed a positive attitude toward literacy related activities. Mother's initial attempts at getting him to do things were unsuccessful. She felt that nursery succeeded where she had failed. "He really just changed. I felt the nursery were doing that."	Felt that 5+ start was right for son in terms of his development. He was only now ready for school. "I feel now he is ready to go on to full time school"	Is not worried. Child is confident and looking forward to the move. "He's quite happy to go to school. He's looking forward to it".	Was very happy as soon as he started doing afternoons rather than mornings. Popular with other children and responsive to activities.	Satisfied that he was now progressing adequately even though recognised that others were doing things better. This was not of concern to her. Could write his name and keen to read book that came back from school.
Jasper	Felt there was not enough emphasis on literacy development. "Everything revolved around play. Almost to my mind too much". Acknowledged that they are still very young, "and it does happen in the play kind of way". Had a very happy experience. Lots of friends and enjoyed going to school.	Did not suggest an earlier age of entry but felt that more could be demanded within the Nursery environment.	Extremely worried."I think it's going to be a shock to him to have to sit down all day and work, work, work" "I think he's going to find it really hard"	Very happy, "He's really, really enjoyed (it)..". "He's got lots of playmates"	"He's not particularly good" but mum feels he will not find it difficult as he has the interest. Feels he has come on enormously in the last term. While he never would pick up pen and paper now loves to do so.
Kevin	No academic expectations. Felt nursery was there to get him used to other children "To get him ready to start full-time school. "Assessed school very positively. "They've done their best for him". Has had a happy time. Has his own little friends and tries very hard. No concerns expressed by school to give grounds for anxiety.	In favour. Feels he now needs a Reception class. "I feel he's too young" Her other children were well over five when they started school, he will be just five. Does not want him to be under pressure or feel he is not able to do things which the others can.	Very concerned. Worried that he will not cope well in large playground. Describe him as quite a timid child. Also cannot yet write his name. Academic aspect will be very demanding for him. Afraid that he will get "upset" if other children are doing things he is not able to do yet. School have not expressed the same concern.	Has been very happy. Relaxed atmosphere in which he tries hard to do everything. Has made a group of friends.	Has not started process at all. Does not recognise words when being read to. However, mum not concerned at all. "The reading at the moment just doesn't bother me cos I think that's going to come later". Is much more concerned that he cannot write his name. Thinks he might be left-handed and has found it difficult to help him.

Sammy	Very happy with experience. Broad range of activities. "They do everything there really" "I'd expected it to be everything that it is" "I am very happy with it". Have taught him to interact well with other children. Has noticed a big change in him in the last six months. "I think they have been very good. I think they have got him ready".	Would have been very happy to have him at home another six months, "he seems very young to me still". At the same time was disappointed that he was missing out on rising fives. "I was quite sorry really that he hasn't had a reception term".Feels he would have "coped" with full day this last term though it would have made him tired.	Feels transition is too sudden, from an all play environment to an almost all work environment. "I think it's going to be a bit of a shock"."I think he'll be absolutely worn out. I really do".	No problems associated with school. Seems happily settled.	Is quite satisfied with his progress but feels he will do things in his own time. Not interested in learning per se and cannot make him do it.Eg reluctant to write his name "Robert's the sort I just want to play child". Very interested in books in general, being read to.
Carl	Very happy. Might have liked slightly more to be sent home in terms of worksheets but otherwise satisfied. Felt she needed help in this area. Familiarisation with school and building, getting on with other children. Opportunities for imaginative play. Learned a lot of the basic s but she could probably have taught him herself anyway . "Anyone who doesn't send their children to nursery is bonkers". At the same time felt there was not enough real learning time in nursery. Mainstream classes are more discilpined.	Against later entry. Would have liked him to go in at the beginning of the year. Was quite "disappointed" when she moved into the borough. "I felt he was ready for more a lot sooner than he got it." Felt he was very immature and that a more formal environment would have helped him to grow up sooner. "he can't go on being a six and seven year old with the attitude he's got at the moment".	Mother had been worried about whether he would cope but re-assured by teacher. So far has been fine. Occasionally complains he cannot find someone to play with at lunch time but mother feels this is "put on" for sympathy.	Generally settled well. Occasionally complained that noone would play with him. If he was tired sometimes reluctant to go. Not communicative about his activities there. But no major problems. Mother thought he was "a bit sensitive" and felt he needed to "grow up"	Found it quite a struggle but very keen to try. " Id like him to be able to read better just for his own, ease his own frustration but I am happy with the way he is progressing and the speed he is progressing". Helped him a lot in nursery but found it a very different experience to her daughter. Son found it all very hard work.
Billy	Very satisfied. Expectations more than met "He's managed to achieve everything I'd expect out of him". Wanted him to view nursery as a place to learn, not just to run around the playground but not to be pushed.	Not in a rush to have started earlier but feel he is learning well now. Consider his start early as compare it to Scandinavia where father had many years education.	Has been "quite smooth". Adapted more easily than expected but has made him "a bit tired and ratty". Expected tears and problems but had none. Everything is " more scheduled" which he does find hard	Very happy experience. Learned his abc, his numbers up to ten without being pushed.	Feel he "is doing so well". Excellent concentration and well motivated. Behind his peers in his writing skills but not concerned about this. He is very happy to be writing.

Table A.8.1

APPENDIX 9

Section A

Dear «Title» «Last_Name»,

As you will remember we met last year and talked about your son, «Childname».
This summer I have continued my research project with two further visits to all the children involved in my study.

I would be very interested to hear from you about your child's school year and about how you feel your child is progressing. I enclose a questionnaire and I would be very grateful if you could find the time to complete it and return it to me in the s.a.e.

As with all information collected during the course of my work, I would like to assure you that the contents of these questionnaires remain completely anonymous and are used only for the purposes of this study.

Thank you for your continuing support in my work.

Yours sincerely,

Judy Lever-Chain

JULY 2000

YEAR ONE EXPERIENCE

1. How did your child settle into the Year One?
   (Tick the appropriate box)

a) Very easily ☐
b) Quite well ☐
c) With some difficulty ☐
d) With great difficulty ☐

If your child experienced some difficulties please describe them:

.....
.....
.....
.....

2. How long did your child take to settle into Year One?

a) Less than a week ☐
b) A few weeks ☐
c) Between half and one term ☐
d) More than one term ☐

3. Did your child find school work in Year One:

a) Very easy ☐
b) Quite easy ☐
c) Quite difficult ☐
d) Very difficult ☐

(Tick the appropriate box)

PLEASE TURN OVER

4. During Year One did your child have to work:

a) Very hard ☐
b) Quite hard ☐
c) Not very hard ☐
d) Not at all hard ☐

(Tick the appropriate box)

5. Did your child find any aspects of school "a struggle" while he was in Year One?

Yes ☐ No ☐
(Tick the appropriate box)

If so please describe:
.....
.....
.....
.....

LEARNING TO READ

6. How often does your child practise reading with you or another person at home?

a) Every day
b) 3 to 5 times per week
c) Once per week
d) Less than once per week

(Tick the appropriate box)

7. Does your child bring a book home from school

a) every day
b) two or three times per week
c) once a week
d) less than once a week

(Tick the appropriate box)

PLEASE TURN OVER

8. Have you any concerns about your child's reading?

Yes ☐ No ☐

(Tick the appropriate box)

If you have any concerns please describe what these are:

.....
.....
.....

9. Have you any concerns about your child's writing?

Yes ☐ No ☐
(Tick the appropriate box)

If you have any concerns please describe what these are:

.....
.....
.....
.....

10. Do you feel you have helped your child with his reading:

a) A lot ☐
b) Quite a lot ☐
c) Not very much ☐
d) Not at all ☐

(Tick the appropriate box)

If you feel you have helped your child with his reading please describe how:

.....
.....
.....

11. Has your child enjoyed learning to read in Year One?

a) A lot ☐
b) Quite a lot ☐
c) Not very much ☐
d) Not at all ☐
(Tick the appropriate box)

PLEASE TURN OVER

12. How did your child feel about learning to read in Year One?

a) It was very difficult ☐
b) It was quite difficult ☐
c) It was easy ☐
d) It was very easy ☐

(Tick the appropriate box)

13. Are you satisfied with your child's progress in learning to read?

Yes ☐ No ☐
(Tick the appropriate box)

If not please explain:

.....
.....
.....
.....

14. Does your child seem to have any preferences in his choice of reading?

Yes ☐ No ☐
(Tick the appropriate box)

If 'yes' please describe.....
.....
.....
.....

SCHOOL AND HOME

15. How often do you talk to your child's teacher about his school work?

a) Every day ☐
b) Once per week ☐
c) Every few weeks ☐
d) Less than once per term ☐

16. Does your teacher give you guidance in how to help your child at home with his reading?

Yes ☐ No ☐
(Tick the appropriate box)

If so describe the type of guidance that is given:

.....
.....
.....
.....

THANK YOU FOR ANSWERING THESE QUESTIONS

If you would like to add any more comments relating to these questions please feel free to do so below:

Section B

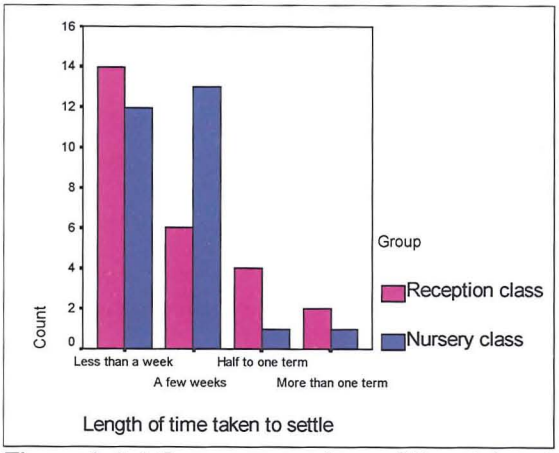


Figure A.9.1 Group comparison of time taken to settle into school

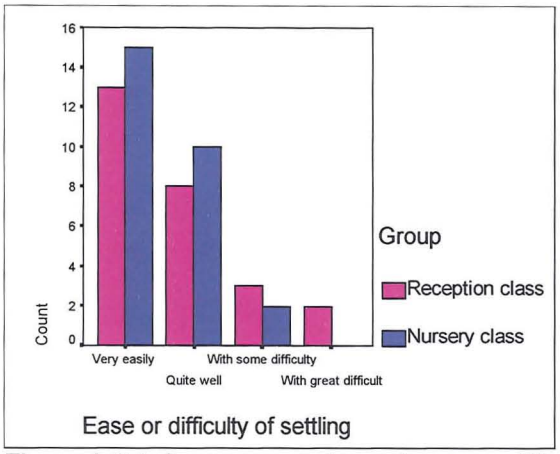


Figure A.9.2 Group comparison of ease or difficulty of settling into school

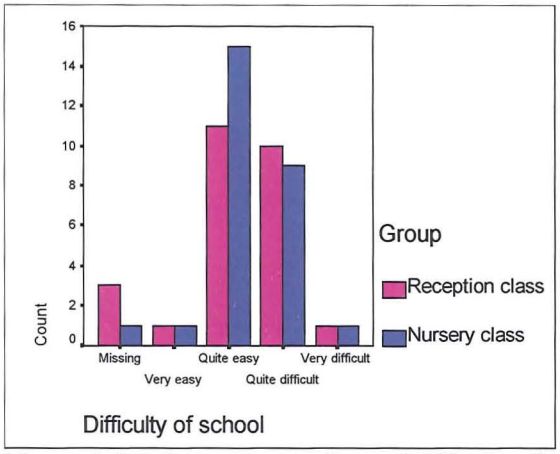


Figure A.9.3 Group comparison of difficulty of school

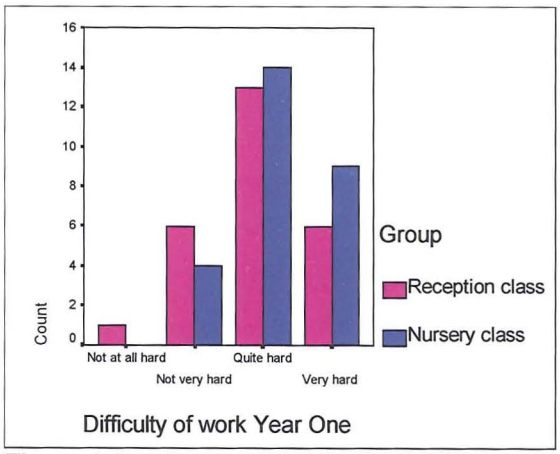


Figure A.9.4 Group comparison of difficulty of work in Year One

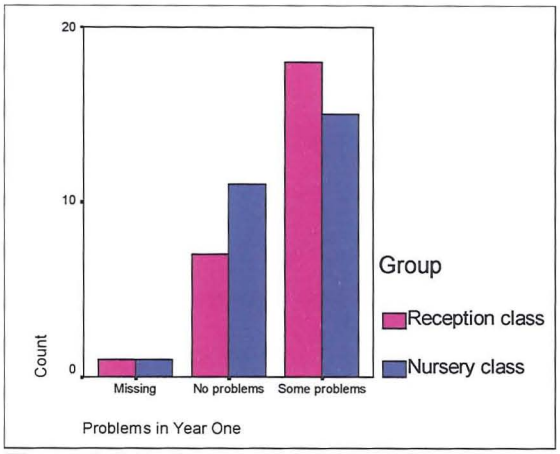


Figure A.9.5. Group comparison of problems encountered in Year One

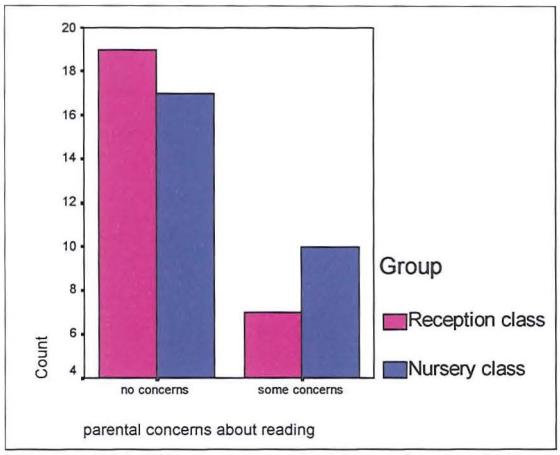


Figure A.9.6 Group comparison of parental concerns about reading

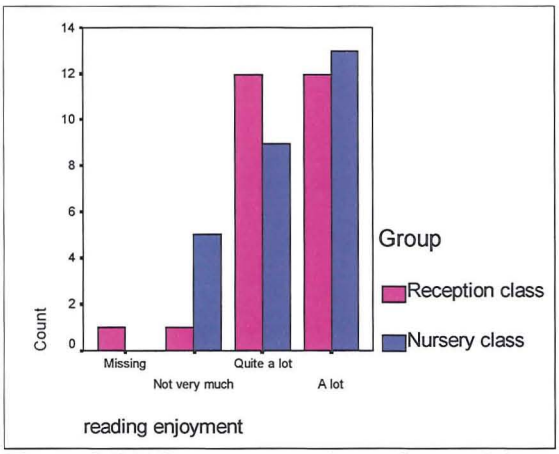


Figure A.9.7 Group comparison of parental assessment of boys' enjoyment of learning to read

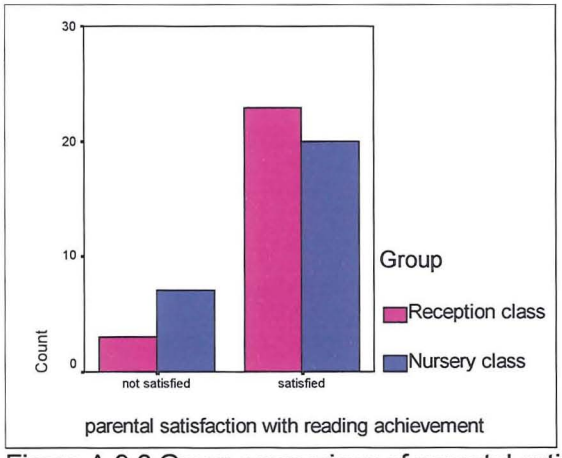


Figure A.9.8 Group comparison of parental satisfaction with boys' reading achievement

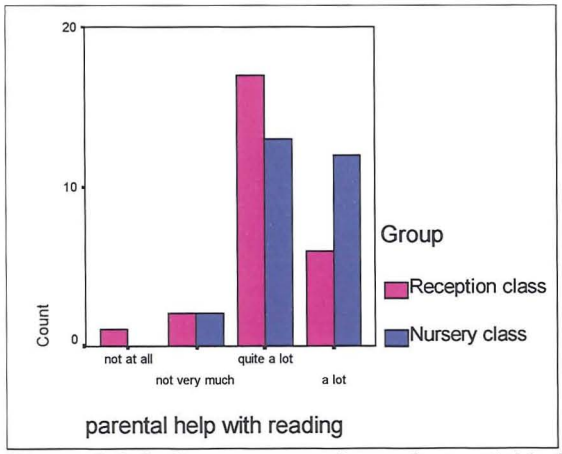


Figure A.9.9. Group comparison of parental help with reading

APPENDIX 10

Section A

Nonparametric correlations

Correlations

			School Enjoyment	Difficulty of Work	Work Load	Problems in Year Two
Spearman's rho	School Enjoyment	Correlation Coefficient	1.00	-.42**	-.33*	-.32*
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.00	.02	.02
		N	51.00	51.00	51.00	50.00
	Difficulty of Work	Correlation Coefficient	-.42**	1.00	.48**	.52**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.00	.	.00	.00
		N	51.00	51.00	51.00	50.00
	Work Load	Correlation Coefficient	-.33*	.48**	1.00	.28
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.02	.00	.	.05
		N	51.00	51.00	51.00	50.00
	Problems in Year Two	Correlation Coefficient	-.32*	.52**	.28	1.00
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.02	.00	.05	.
		N	50.00	50.00	50.00	50.00

**. Correlation is significant at the .01 level (2-tailed).

*. Correlation is significant at the .05 level (2-tailed).

Section B

Group comparisons of parental views

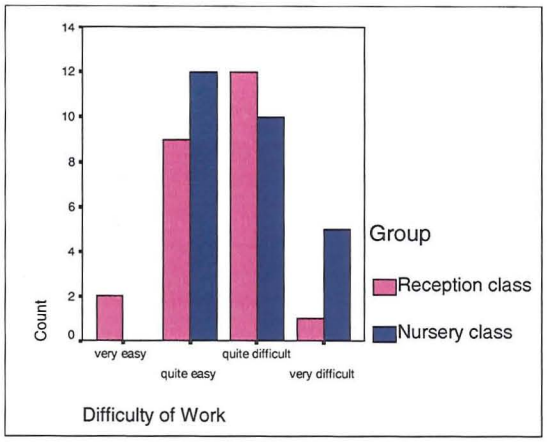


Figure A.10.1 Group comparison of difficulty of work in Year Two

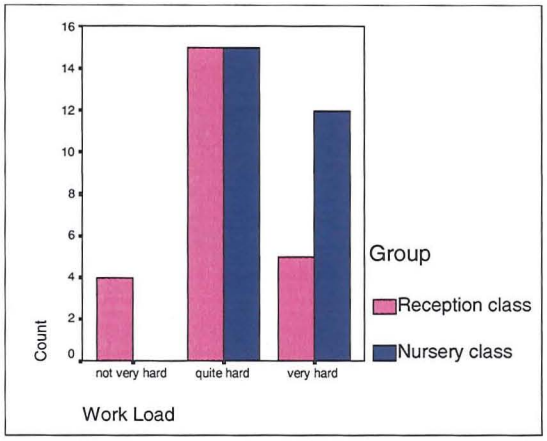


Figure A.10.2 Group comparison of workload in Year Two

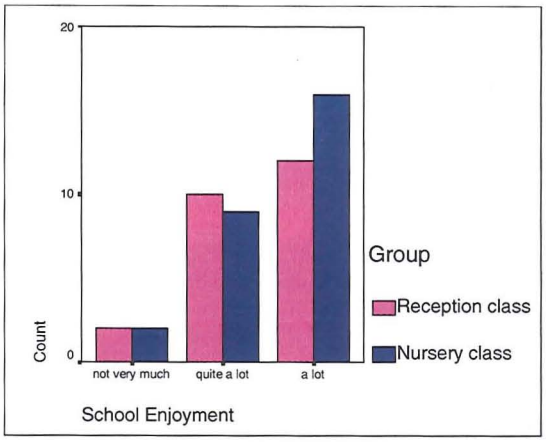


Figure A.10.3 Group comparison of school enjoyment

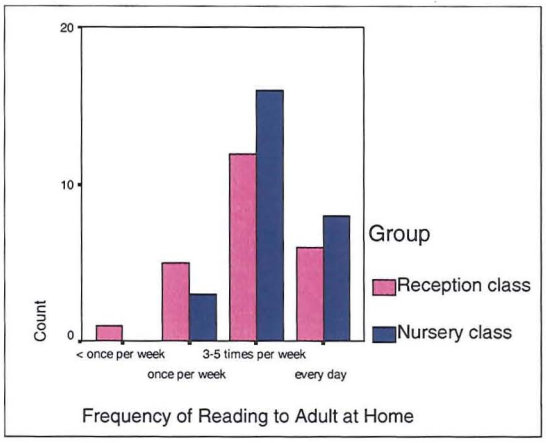


Figure A.10.4 Group comparison of frequency reading to adult at home

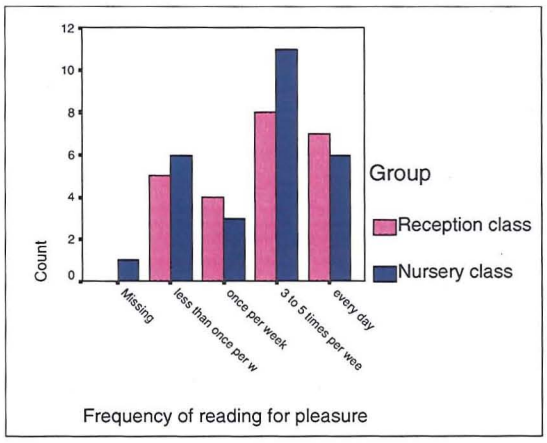


Figure A.10.5 Group comparison of frequency of reading for pleasure

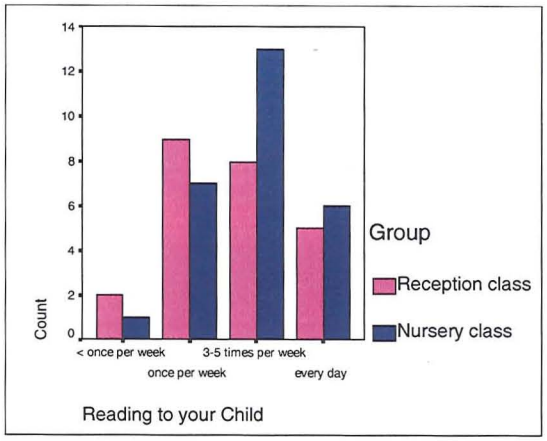


Figure A.10.6 Group comparison of frequency of reading aloud to children

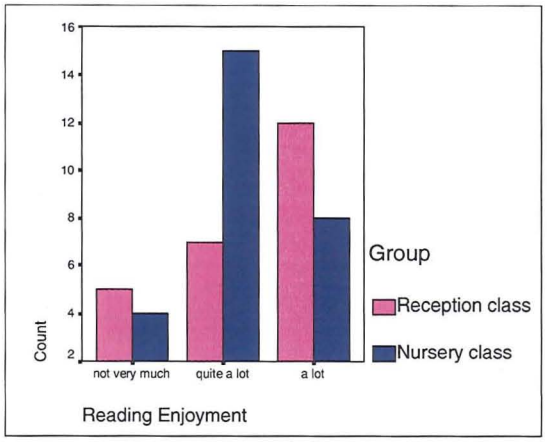


Figure A.10.7 Group comparison of reading enjoyment

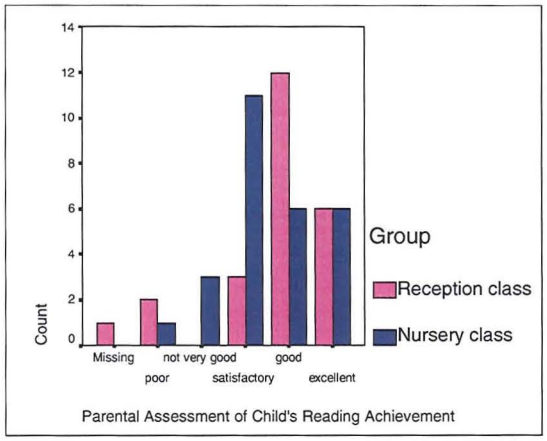


Figure A.10.8 Group comparison of parental assessment of child's reading achievement

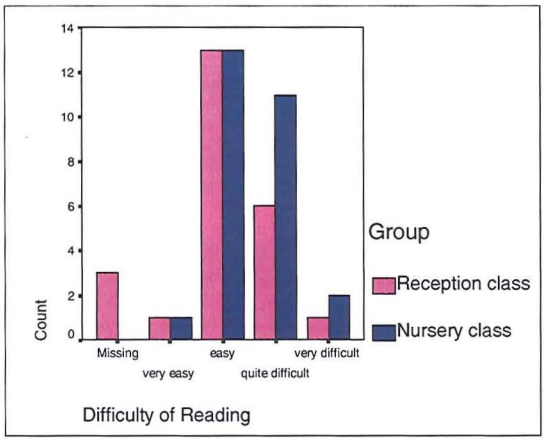


Figure A.10.9 Parental assessment of difficulty of reading

Section C

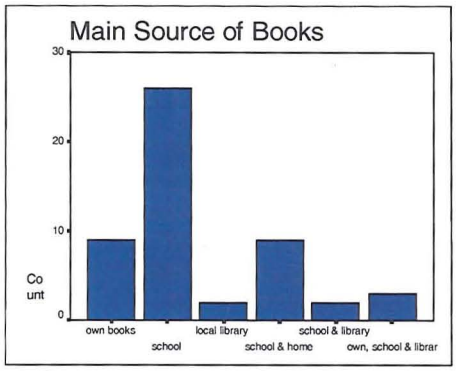


Figure A.10.10 Source of books

Section D

Correlations

		Neale Comprehension Raw Score	Neale Accuracy Raw Score	Parental Assessment of Child's Reading
Neale Comprehension Raw Score	Pearson Correlation	1.00	.70**	.62**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.00	.00
	N	57.00	57.00	49.00
Neale Accuracy Raw Score	Pearson Correlation	.70**	1.00	.77**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.00	.	.00
	N	57.00	57.00	49.00
Parental Assessment of Child's Reading	Pearson Correlation	.62**	.77**	1.00
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.00	.00	.
	N	49.00	49.00	50.00

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Section E

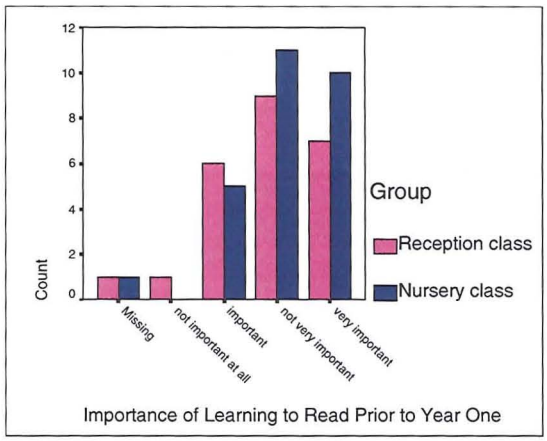


Figure A.10.11 Importance of learning to read prior to Key Stage One

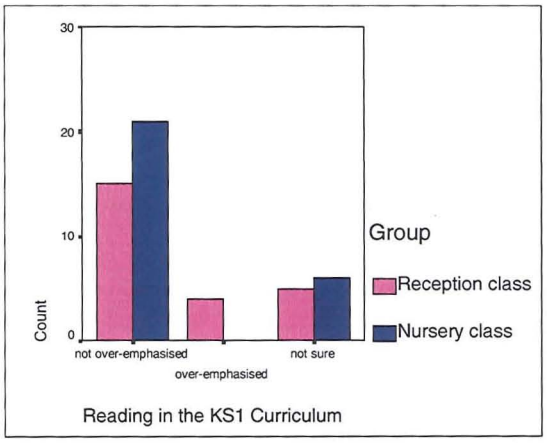


Figure A.10.12 Importance of reading in the Key Stage One curriculum

Section F: Parental Perception of Relative Importance of School Years Before and During KS 1

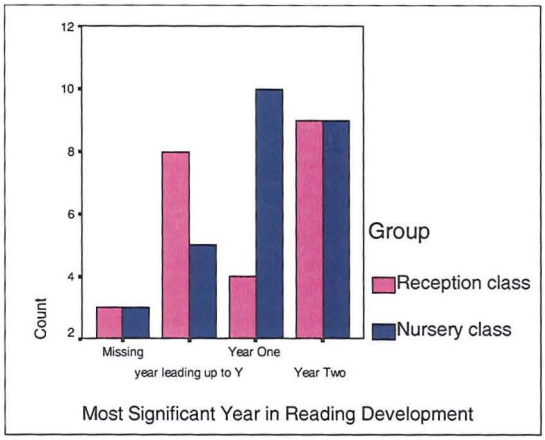


Figure A.10.13 Most significant school year for reading development

Crosstabs

Case Processing Summary

	Cases					
	Valid		Missing		Total	
	N	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent
according to early years experience * Most Significant Year in Reading Development	27	100.0%	0	.0%	27	100.0%

according to early years experience * Most Significant Year in Reading Development Crosstabulation

Count

		Most Significant Year in Reading Development		
		year leading up to Year One	Year One	Total
according to early years experience	reception class	8	4	12
	nursery class	5	10	15
Total		13	14	27

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (1-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	2.967[b]	1	.085		
Continuity Correction[a]	1.782	1	.182		
Likelihood Ratio	3.021	1	.082		
Fisher's Exact Test				.128	.091
Linear-by-Linear Association	2.857	1	.091		
N of Valid Cases	27				

a. Computed only for a 2x2 table

b. 0 cells (.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 5.78.

Section G

Views About Age of Entry to School

Case Processing Summary

	Cases					
	Valid		Missing		Total	
	N	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent
Views About Age of Entry * according to early years experience	22	100.0%	0	.0%	22	100.0%

Views About Age of Entry * according to early years experience Crosstabulation

Count

		according to early years experience		
		Reception class	Nursery class	Total
Views About Age of Entry	too early	10	2	12
	too late	1	9	10
Total		11	11	22

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (1-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	11.733[b]	1	.001		
Continuity Correction[a]	8.983	1	.003		
Likelihood Ratio	13.183	1	.000		
Fisher's Exact Test				.002	.001
Linear-by-Linear Association	11.200	1	.001		
N of Valid Cases	22				

a. Computed only for a 2x2 table

b. 0 cells (.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 5.00.